

Dumbledore's Army and the Wizard Revolution

Chapter 1 - A Letter from a Friend

It had been a month since Sirius' death and Harry was still as remorseful as ever. He still cannot overcome his guilt about what happened to his godfather. He blamed his ineptitude in Occlumency and hero complex as what his friends called him before. If he had not been foolish enough, he would have realized that there is still an Order member in the school, although he couldn't blame himself enough for that. He still didn't trust Snape and that might be the reason why it did not occur to him to ask for his assistance. Besides, he knew that Snape detests his godfather and would probably just ignore his plea.

However, if he had really taken his Occlumency lessons seriously, Voldemort would not have been able to manipulate his thoughts. It was fault...why was he so stupid! Now, his stupidity and recklessness caused his godfather's life and he could never forgive himself for that.... With that final remorseful thought, Harry eventually fell sleep, taking with him a guilt so great that Voldemort was once again able to penetrate his mind.

"Potter, once again you fell into my trap! How can you even dare hope to defeat me, the greatest wizard of all time, with your pathetic attempt at magic? I assure you that more of your friends shall die and you would never be able to stop me from conquering the world that is rightfully mine!" Voldemort's laughter echoed in his ears and his scar bled almost mercilessly.

Harry was forced awake by that recurring nightmare. It had been his constant dream since Sirius died. Sometimes, he wished that he wouldn't need to sleep anymore. He tried to stay awake the whole night but after almost a week, his body gave up on him. He could not fight his sleepiness anymore. He even wished that the Dursleys would still give him a hard time just so he could think of something else aside from brooding about what happened in the Department of Mysteries last month.

But no, true to his word, his Uncle Vernon struggled with himself not to give him a hard time. The whole family, even Dudley, did not require him to do household chores anymore. They didn't pick on him anymore and it had been so silent since he arrived that he almost wished for them to return to their normal behavior so he could feel some sort of normalcy in his life. It was so pathetic. He felt so desperate and powerless. So unlike the wonder wizard boy that everyone in the magical world imagined him to be. How they would laugh or be scared if they saw their "savior" moping around the house with nothing to do and with nothing that he could do to finally fulfill the prophecy that everyone expected him to accomplish in the soonest possible time.

He gazed at his window again, hoping for even a measly scribble from his friends at Hogwarts. A month had passed but no one had written him with even a single hello.

"Maybe they are also angry at me because of what happened....maybe they hate me now....maybe they don't want to have anything to do with me now....maybe....no, I should not be thinking this way..." He hastily chided himself...maybe they just can't...but ...

He was suddenly distracted by a minute owl flying towards his window...he felt excited...finally, a letter from his friends...He could not recognize the owl but who cares...finally someone cared enough to owl him.

Dear Harry,

How are you? I have been trying to write you a letter since the end of last term but I can't seem to find the right words. I know most people think that I am a little bit off but I am fairly sure that you are not one of them.

I meant what I said before...our loved ones are just behind the veil....We heard them...we just can't see them but maybe later we will find a way...

Wouldn't it be wonderful if one from Hogwarts will be able to solve that mystery? My mom, she worked for the Department of Mysteries

before you know, said that they have been trying to solve that particular mystery for a very long time but no one came close yet...for all we know, Hermione will be able to solve it in the future....She's so bright. Do you like her?

Oh, it seems that I'm rambling again...I am so lonely here. Father is away somewhere and I don't have anyone to talk to. No one writes to me...I sure hope you will find some time to reply.

Love,

Luna

Luna?!? Harry stared at the letter in shock. Luna, the one who everyone teases as Loony, owled him while his so-called friends couldn't even find a way or time to write a simple hello to him. He shook his head in amazement and frustration as he got up to get his quill and a small bit of parchment to reply to her letter. At least someone cared...although he was a little curious about why she asked him if he likes Hermione and why she wrote "love" at the end of the letter but maybe he was thinking too much...

Dear Luna,

Hello! Thank you for writing...I know we have not been able to talk much before but I really appreciate your letter. Like you, I have nothing to do here too. The others are too busy doing something but I'm stuck here. I'm feeling quite useless actually. All I do was read the same thing over and over again. I'm really glad you owled me.

About your letter, actually I am not so sure yet about that veil but maybe...maybe you are right. I am quite confused right now. I think Hermione is really intelligent and she might work it out someday if she believes it is something worth solving. She's a great friend actually but I don't like her in that way. She's one of my bestfriends. Why do you ask by the way?

Classes is approaching. Would you like to go with us to buy school supplies at Diagon Alley? I have not gotten the letter from Hogwarts yet but maybe it will arrive soon...

Your friend,

Harry

'There', he thought, 'someone feels as empty as me...at least someone understands...I hope she replies soon...'

Harry sat on his bed gazing at the window, watching as his owl, Hedwig, flies away to its destination. For the first time that summer, a flicker of a smile crossed his lips. And for the first time, his dreams had been as boring as his real life...

The next day, Harry got up, made his bed, ate a hearty breakfast and proceeded to his room to wait for Luna's reply... If she was as bored as she said she was, she would have a reply for him today. True enough, the minute owl, which he now recognized as Luna's owl, came rushing to his window and flew directly to him. Harry excitedly extricated the parchment from the owl's lap and led it to Hedwig's cage to quench its thirst. He almost ripped the paper in his haste.

Hi Harry,

Wow, that was quick! I was not really expecting a reply so soon...well actually, I was not really expecting you to reply. But I'm so glad you did. Did you just invite me to meet you at Diagon Alley? I would love to! Thank you very much.

By the way, Father has informed that he won't be coming back. I'm not sure what happened and I don't know what he meant by that. I'm really worried. This is the first time that my father was away so long. Do you think he found some Crumple Horned Snorkacks in his journey and was too busy to come back? If that's the case, then I would perfectly understand. Those creatures are very interesting and father probably decided to stay there to learn more about them.

I'm lonely though. I don't have anyone here with me and the gnomes etc...are driving me crazy. But I know Father will get me after he is finished with everything he wants to do there. We will celebrate Christmas together. It will be a happy reunion and I can finally prove that Crumple Horned Snorkacks do exist.

You know, I have read from a muggle book that people can still communicate with those from other dimensions through a medium. Is

it true? I wanted to talk to mom but I can't seem to find the correct potion or incantation for me to be able to do that. Father should publish something about that in the Quibbler someday, what do you think? Speaking of the Quibbler, I think our magazine is having some problems with the wizard printing press. No issue has been released for almost a month now.

Father told me not to worry about it but I miss solving the crossword and without that, life is so much more dreary in this place.

I wish you are doing better there. Don't you worry. Time flies so fast anyway....hope to see you soon!

Love,

Luna

'Something is wrong', thought Harry, as he stared at the parchment.

Chapter 2 - A Chat with Aunt Petunia

Harry stared hard at the parchment wishing he knows what's going on. Something was definitely not right! Even the Daily Prophet didn't send him newspapers anymore. He stopped writing to his so-called friends after sending several letters without any reply. He was inclined to think that all has been a dream if not for Luna's letter and all the books of enchantments sprawled on his bedroom...

Then suddenly, it came to him. Why not take a leaf from Hermione's book and try to learn a few advanced spells himself..... something like apparition...or maybe something else...Surely, the Ministry is still monitoring him and will dispatch wizards if they catch any sign of magic in Privet Drive. With that thought, Harry proceeded to his new productive escape from boredom.

If he could master apparition then maybe he could go to the Burrow, Grimmauld Place or Hogwarts and find things out for himself. He could just imagine Luna being scared but putting a tough front all the same. He must find a way to help her.

How to Apparate:

You must empty your mind except for the place you want to appear to. Picture it clearly on your mind and summon your power from within to let your body dissolve into atoms and travel at lightning speed to that particular place. Remember to imagine your whole self traveling so as not to leave anything behind.

For beginners, one must point their wands to their chest and utter "Apparato and wherever you want to go" clearly. This is a very advanced spell and one must be very careful in attempting this. As the wizard becomes more proficient with this spell, the requirements will be lesser. Soon, just mere thought of the spell will bring you to wherever you want to go.

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'Hey, this seems easy enough' thought Harry. 'Kind of like Occlumency'. He practiced for almost an hour until he got the hang of it. Soon he was apparating to any part of the Dursley's house with his wand. It never even crossed his mind that other wizards would not have been able to do that within an hour.

Dear Luna,

Don't worry too much. I think your father has a good reason for not coming back. Maybe he really was able to encounter some Crumple Horned Snorkacks and

Harry's line of thought was suddenly distracted by the sound of owls coming to Privet Drive. 'Finally!' he thought....but no, the owls did not go to his window as usual. He did some quick thinking. The only person in the house aside from him is Aunt Petunia. If the letters were not for him, then maybe it was for her. Without stopping to get his wand, he immediately apparated to the kitchen where he found Aunt Petunia nervously reading the parchments.

"Aunt Petunia, who are those letters from?" He decided to approach her nicely since he doesn't want to risk her getting all nervous and refuse to answer his questions again like she did last year when Dumbledore sent her a howler.

"Umm....ahh....I can't tell you...I swore to keep....oh, what am I saying? Vernon will be mad at me and Dudley..." said Petunia awkwardly, desperately trying to hide her nervousness as she hid the letter in the pocket of her dress.

"Please, can you please tell me? Uncle Vernon and Dudley are not here. They don't need to know that you have been talking to me about you - know?" Harry fumbled for the correct words to soothe her nerves. At her emotional state, she might go off without telling him anything if he didn't choose his words carefully.

Aunt Petunia took several deep breathes and busied herself with washing the dishes before she looked at her nephew again. But what she said took him completely by surprise.

"I was a witch, Harry."

"What?!? Excuse me?" He must have heard wrong. There's no way that her Aunt is a witch. She hates them.

As if reading his mind, she made two cups of coffee and motioned for him to sit down on the table with her. She looked at the window as if remembering some very unpleasant memories.

"I said I was a witch, Harry. Just like your mother. "Was" not "is". I don't hate her as much as I said I do. It is more like my sense of self-preservation taking over. I enjoyed being able to do magic once....until something happened..." At this point, Aunt Petunia gazed nervously at the door and seemed to hesitate before she continued. Harry looked at her expectantly but did not press her.

"Do you remember my reaction to Dementors when they attacked you and Dudley last year?"

Harry recalled the situation very well. He was not only anxious and irritated that time but also insanely curious as to why her aunt remembered that bit of information about the wizarding world after several years of ignoring their existence. He nodded patiently and encouraged her to go on.

"Dementors attacked our house during the reign of Voldemort and has taken the whole family except for Lily who was at the wizard hospital that time. They brought us to Azkaban along with some other wizards. I didn't understand it the time. I was so young and hadn't even went to Hogwarts yet. I thought only the death-eaters attack and kill people but that was my first time to encounter dementors. But it turned out that the dementors kept us there to for food. They extracted all our happy thoughts and drained all the magic within us.

Soon, the prisoners were dying one by one until only a few remained. We were rescued eventually but it was too late. The survivors were reduced to being muggles and were forced to live a muggle life from then onwards. Of course, our memories were modified except for our parents because they still had Lily to consider. Mine was lifted when Lily and James were murdered by Voldemort and I had to take care of you. That's why I was so bitter. You reminded me of the life I once loved but was forced to leave. I also misdirected my anger to Lily.

Why did she survive when all of us did not?" Aunt Petunia gritted her teeth to control the tears that are currently flowing on her cheeks.

Harry was dumbfounded for a moment. He didn't know what to say. How come nobody told him about what happened to his aunt. But it was a long time ago, perhaps nobody really remembers that his aunt was once a witch. Surely, Dumbledore would know but...how come he did not tell him? Several thoughts are flowing through his mind right now but couldn't quite articulate his thoughts. He just sat there and looked at her aunt in wonder.

Sirius said before that dementors really had that draining effect on wizards and only strong ones can hold on to their powers and sanity for a long period of time. His aunt was still young that time. She was not that strong yet...but Sirius said that it is possible for the magical powers to return after some time.

"Hasn't your magical powers returned yet?" He cautiously asked his aunt.

"No, it hasn't. When Dumbledore lifted my memory charm, he said it will return after some time. I was hopeful for a while but after several years of trying nothing has happened and I grew more bitter than ever." she answered while still gazing hopelessly at the window as if waiting for something or someone.

"But surely, Dumbledore would...."

"Dumbledore stated quite clearly to me that there is nothing that he can do. Only I can make it reappear but I can't." she answered bitterly. She got up suddenly and motioned for him to come closer as if afraid that someone will hear what she has got to say.

"But he also hinted that if the boy-who-lived destroys the dementor's leader then every witch and wizard who suffered in their hands will regain their powers and be able to help him defeat Voldemort. I assume it was you, Harry. Please don't tell Vernon and Dudley but I really want my powers my back if only to be able to do something in this coming war. I hate being helpless. The dementors' attack last year reminded me how powerless I am to stop them if they ever decide to capture all of us. Please help me." she looked into Harry's

deep green eyes and did something that Harry never expected her to do before. She hugged him... like a mother embracing her favorite child.

"Do you have a wand?"

"What?"

"I asked if you have a wand. I figured if I have to try to regain your powers then maybe I should start with teaching you basic spells so that you know how to use them when the time comes..."

"Do I need one? Well, as far as I can remember, I used to do magic before without a wand. You yourself never used a wand before in some of the magics you performed. Remember when you managed to grow your hair back and the time when you made the glass in the zoo disappear. I knew it was you. I just chose not to say anything." Aunt Petunia plainly looked bewildered at the mention of needing a wand for basic spells.

Harry looked confused for a while too...'Come to think of that. Dumbledore doesn't always need a wand to perform some spells too...' He looked at her aunt with a new found respect. She made him remember something that he just took for granted before. 'Wandless magic....yeah, it's possible'. He smiled at her aunt.

"Well, since we cannot go to Diagon Alley yet to buy you a wand, let's try practicing wandless magic first. Wait for a while, I'll just get my spell books." Harry quickly apparated to his bedroom. He was already there when he realized that he just apparated without using his wand and without too much effort on his part.

He noticed his unfinished letter and tried to finish it as quickly as he can before apparating back to the kitchen.

Dear Luna,

Don't worry too much. I think your father has a good reason for not coming back. Maybe he really was able to encounter some Crumple Horned Snorkacks and is probably too excited for words. Lots of things seem to be happening but I can't figure out what yet.

Please do try to be careful there and owl me as soon as you find any unusual thing happening.

Your friend,

Harry

Chapter 3 - The Training Begins

"Now this spell is one of the basics. It's for levitation, the incantation is 'wingardium leviosa'. The wand movement is swish and flick then say the incantation clearly. Let me demonstrate it with a wand." Harry carefully levitated one of the chairs to another part of the kitchen while his aunt watched like an eager freshman at Hogwarts.

"I'm not quite sure how to do it without a wand yet since I have no control yet over wandless magic. All those spells I did before were just done accidentally. I have no idea yet how to do them but at least learning the spells will be good for starters." He smiled feeling like the session is just another meeting with the other members of Dumbledore's Army or DA, the club they formed last year in defiance of the useless Defense Against the Darts lessons that Umbridge had subjected them to.

Aunt Petunia nodded enthusiastically while taking down notes. She plans to review and memorize them later. Then she looked at his nephew as if trying to recall something.

"Now here are other useful spells that we learned in school. "Accio" to summon things, "Rictusempra" to tickle someone, "Expelliarmus" to disarm your opponent, "Tarantallegra" to ---" He was cut suddenly by sudden gasp from his aunt.

"Harry! I think I have just remembered something. Can you recall all those that you have done wandless magic? What were the conditions then?" She asked curiously.

"Umm....well, as far as I can remember, I usually do that when I am extremely agitated or very scared. Any extreme emotion actually. Why do you ask?"

Aunt Petunia looked nervous again as she tries to find something in her pockets. Harry observed his aunt carefully and the letter that she received a while ago crossed his mind again.

"Does this have anything to do with the letter I asked you about?" He was really tired of this secrecy thing but he knew he must be patient. Recklessness just caused him a lot of trouble before.

"The note was from Dumbledore." She answered carefully while handing him the parchment. Harry hastened to read the short message-"IT IS TIME..."

"What does this mean?"

"It means that since it is your 16th birthday today, I must now tell you some things that we concealed from you. You need to know in order to prepare for the war properly. Much as I hate to admit it, you have to know the truth. I owe you so much for treating you like dirt, you don't deserve it, and for saving my son's life last summer." She stood up and paced the room trying to organize her thoughts.

"It also means that things are going bad because Dumbledore or any other adult wizard is not present for this. It is up to me now to help you discover some of your hidden potentials." She suddenly stopped and looked at him in the eye. "I need to help you develop wandless magic because any unarmed wizard is very vulnerable for attacks. Do you understand? It will be terribly difficult because I can only help you but I cannot show you."

Harry saw tears flowing through her cheeks but he was too shock from numb to say or do anything... Things were that bad? What did she mean? Mind games was one thing but leading a very dangerous life without knowing what was going on was making his emotions reach its limit. Suddenly, the rage bottled inside him pushed towards the surface.

"Harry! HARRY!" His aunt shouted at him nervously as the cups on the table exploded with a loud bang and almost everything were moving as if a tremendous earthquake is causing it. Plates flew everywhere and the wind was so intense that it became very hard for Petunia to go near his nephew who looks as if he was in a trance. His whole body was emitting a golden glow that was very similar to what happened last summer when Vernon pressured him into answering his questions.

"WHAT IN RUDDY HELL IS GOING ON HERE?" Vernon hollered as he stepped into the living room and froze in his tracks as he noticed his nephew radiating all the energy that is wreaking havoc into the whole house.

"STOP THIS NONSENSE NOW, BOY! OR YOU WILL BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE! GO TO YOUR ROOM! NOW!" He ventured and pretended to watch TV while stealing nervous glances at his nephew.

As quickly as it had come, Harry found his wits again and managed to put a stop to it. He grimaced as he surveyed the surroundings and found his aunt staring at him with an unfathomable expression. Ignoring his uncle's presence, he immediately repaired the damage he had done and apparated to his room where he found Hedwig waiting for him. He desperately searched for any sign of anything that he might have brought but there was none.

Hedwig nipped his palm apologetically as if terribly ashamed for not being able to bring him anything. Harry slumped to his bed in shock. It was his 16th birthday today and not a single soul cared enough to send him a single bloody note! Hell, even a simple 'Hi' will do just so he'd know they are still alive! 'WHAT'S HAPPENING!!!' his mind screamed in agony.

Throwing all caution to the wind, he rapidly got up and packed all his belongings. He had to know what's going on outside. How could they expect him to fight back if he was blind to the current situation! God! Better die outside fighting evil than die here of anxiety. Just as he was getting ready to leave, the door swiftly flung open with his Aunt Petunia blocking his path.

"I can apparate you know." He dismissed her attempt to stop him but his aunt grabbed him hastily and whispered furiously at him.

"Don't you leave now! We still need to finish the lessons. You know that you need to prepare and without the others, you have no choice but to listen to me for now. You have the power but you cannot control it yet. Don't you see? The amazing display of magic downstairs was great...but....that.....is.....not.....enough! Tomorrow,

after your uncle goes to work, we will resume. It is imperative that we do this before you do anything else. Understand?"

Harry nodded weakly. "Of course, you're right."

"YOU WILL HAVE NO FOOD TONIGHT, BOY! DON'T SHOW YOUR UGLY FACE IN THE LIVING ROOM AGAIN! DO YOU HEAR?" His aunt suddenly shouted at the top of her lungs while smiling at him knowingly. Harry smiled at her too realizing that it was just for his uncle's benefit.

"That's good, Petunia. That scum should be really taught a lesson. You know we should not have taken that low-life here. He's causing too much trouble. What's for dinner? And where's Dudley?" Harry heard his uncle say to his aunt before he closed the door. He did not hear the reply but he doesn't care.

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The next day's lesson went quite smoothly. After what happened what happened the previous day, Petunia was able to explain about wandless magic better.

"As you probably have noticed, you are able to access your powers only when you are experiencing extreme emotions like anger and desperation. So, this is very similar to the 'patronus charm' you used to repel the dementors. Try to think of some event, thing or person that can heighten your emotions. You must focus on the positive feelings though, leave the negative ones to the evil wizards. Your magic will be stronger that way."

The lessons went on without Vernon and Dudley finding out. By the end of the week, Harry had almost gotten the hang of wandless magic and Petunia has memorized the necessary incantations and wand movements although she cannot apply them yet. Even their relationship had gotten better. Harry could now call her 'Aunt' without feeling rebellious.

The nightmares had miraculously stopped although Harry was not sure if that was due to his increasing competence in Occlumency or he was just too exhausted to have time for nightmares. Even the

pain had stopped. He was not sure if this was a good sign but at least now he felt relieved that he would not collapse in pain when he faced Voldemort again. That always put him at a disadvantage whenever they meet.

Unfortunately, he had no way of knowing now if he was near or not. For all he knew, he could just be sitting outside waiting for his prey. But he quickly brushed away that thought. Voldemort was stupid.... but not that stupid. He was a conniving, souless, evil reincarnate who's main objective in life was to kill some boy who hadn't even graduated yet. How pathetic!

But there was no denying the fact that he was becoming more worried as the day passed by. No one, not even Luna, was writing to him anymore.

Chapter 4 - The Visitor

Petunia watched as his nephew paced around the room restlessly. Almost two weeks had passed since they started training and even she had not received another note from Dumbledore. She assumed Privet Drive was still safe judging by the fact that she, Vernon and Dudley could still proceed to their normal activities without any unusual thing happening but the lack of news was beginning to get on her already frazzled nerves.

'How ironic' she thought. The nephew that she treated like vermin was the only one who could save them now. She had no illusions whatsoever that Voldemort would only attack wizards. Her past experiences taught her that. And as relatives of his mortal enemy, they were one of the primary targets. If not for the protection that Dumbledore had cast to Privet Drive, they might have been killed a long time ago. She shuddered at the memory of the dementor's attack last summer. It was as if history was repeating itself but not quite. Life was not as bad as before. She could feel it. The order was better prepared but could they hang on until Harry was ready for battle?

Harry stopped brooding from time to time to glance at his aunt. He noticed that she was frequently gazing at the door or window as if waiting for something terrible to happen. He mimicked her actions and stared at the door too only to be surprised with a loud bang on the door. Aunt Petunia jumped nervously and shrieked like a banshee before a soft voice called out.

"Hello, is someone there? I need to see Harry. Please tell him it's Luna." The soft voice said while knocking loudly on the door.

Harry cautiously peeked through the little hole on their door to look at the person outside. What he saw was a girl with dirty blond, waist-length and straggly hair, protuberant eyes and a dreamy expression. 'Yes, this is Luna, alright. No one can possibly imitate that classic expression.' Harry thought to himself as he opened the door for her.

"Hi, Harry!" She greeted him warmly as she entered the living room. "Hi there too. It's so nice to see you. What brings you here?" He asked as his gaze fell on the huge backpack she is carrying on her

shoulders. By the looks of her dusty face and dirty clothes, she must have been traveling for quite some time now and was probably dying of hunger and exhaustion although her facial expression didn't show it.

"Oh, well. After reading your last letter, I have decided to take a walk and noticed all the dark marks hovering above some of the houses in our neighborhood at so I have decided to pack up and leave. No one's there anyway." She answered as Harry relieved her of her heavy burden and offered her some drink while his aunt is busy preparing for lunch.

"But, but how did you arrive here." Harry asked thinking about death-eaters scattered everywhere waiting for him to come out.

"I walked." She quickly answered as if it is the most obvious thing to do. "Of course I disillusioned myself so as not to be seen by you-know, unfriendly beings. After that, I refrained from using anymore magic to avoid being detected." She added after seeing his incredulous expression.

"Oh, ok. How far did you travel by the way?"

"Oh, I'm not really sure about the distance but our home is near Ottery St. Catchpole."

Harry almost choked at her words. "You live near the Weasley's? And you said dark marks are everywhere?"

Harry wanted to apparate to the Weasley's right then and then but was distracted by Luna swaying helplessly beside him. Fortunately, he was able to catch her before she fell down. With Luna there, he couldn't leave yet. While waiting for her to recover, he drove himself to his limit trying to master wandless magic at the soonest possible time. He had to be prepared.

'Now I understand. The Order has their hands full and probably stretching themselves trying to save as many people as they can while he prepares. At least, I will no longer be a burden now. No one needs to guard me. I can take care of myself.' Harry was brought back to earth by Luna's soft moans.

"Harry, I know what's happening outside. And I know that however much I wanted to believe otherwise, Father might not really come back. Evil is everywhere. That is why I am here. I want to help you, Harry. I have nothing to lose." She whispered but every word that she uttered was engraved on his mind.

"Do you know what happened to the Weasleys?" He asked her with apprehension. The Weasleys were very nice people and he would hate it if anything bad happens to them especially Ron who had been his bestfriend since freshman year.

"I'm not so sure. There's no dark mark there but aside from the wreck inside, the house is empty."

"WRECK? What -----"

He was interrupted by Aunt Petunia's call for lunch. He helped Luna up and accompanied her to the kitchen. He thought it best to discuss that while eating. Petunia eyed them carefully.

"So, is she your girlfriend, Harry?"

"No, she's one of my friends in school." He answered quickly failing to notice the cloud that passed Luna's eyes for a moment.

"Oh, I was just wondering...Can you please tell us what has been happening now?" She asked as if discussing the activities of the Dark Lord is just an ordinary past time but Harry knew better. He knew that she was quite terrified but was trying hard not to make it noticeable so as not to make them nervous.

Just then, an owl sailed past the still open door and headed straight to Petunia. Harry stared nervously at his aunt who immediately collapsed after reading the message. He quickly ran to her and picked up the letter.

"WAR HAS BEGUN...." The message was written in blood.

Harry froze and even Luna seemed afraid after he let her read it. He quickly revived his aunt to discuss the letter.

"I don't understand. I thought the war begun with the battle at the Department of Mysteries. But from this letter, it seemed that it has just started." Harry asked his aunt who has just been awakened.

"It simply means that the random killings has begun..." His aunt answered softly as if hearing it in that manner would make it less shocking and less real that it was.

Harry quickly finished his meal and beckoned for Luna to follow him. They both collected their things.

"Harry! Where do you think you're going?"

"To help the others."

"No, not yet! Harry, we should wait for further instruction." Aunt Petunia desperately tried to hold them back but to no avail.

"No, I'm tired of waiting already. I have to do something. I will not hide here like a coward who lets others die to protect me. Stay here and wait for instructions. I'll be in touch." With that said, Harry took hold of Luna's hand and apparated both of them to Grimmauld Place where they got another nasty shock of their life. Would it never end?

The once majestic manor was now like another delapidated building as if a hurricane arrived and left without so much of an apology to the inhabitants there. Tables were turned and the irritatingly noisy mother of Sirius was speechless for once. Kreacher was also nowhere to be found. And yes, there were burn marks on the walls too...and blood was everywhere.....BLOOD?!?

Harry and Luna walked around the house in a daze. Both had their wands out expecting the worst. They inspected the rooms hoping for any clue, any sign of life at all. But there was none. The house was empty and its eerie silence was getting to their nerves.

"What is this place, Harry?"

"This is my godfather's house and the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix."

Luna's eyes clouded with concern but was quickly replaced with a steely look of determination. "Come on, let's search the house again. We might have missed something."

They carefully inspected the living room again where the destruction is at its worst. But still they found.....nothing. They both slumped on the sofa in exhaustion and once again scanned the room until they both felt the coldness enveloping them. Wondering why, their eyes both turned to the fireplace and for the first time since they entered the room, they both noticed that there was no fire burning there.

"This is bad." Harry shook his head as if not daring to believe it.

"What's bad?"

"No fire. It usually burns for one week before it dies. It means this has happened almost a week ago or more. And another thing." Harry quickly extracted some floo powder beside the fireplace and instructed Luna to follow him.

"Hogwarts!" They both shouted quickly but nothing happened.

"It seems that it has also been disconnected from the floo network. Nobody can travel to and from that fireplace."

"Excellent, Potter!" Someone clapped from behind him and they both turned to look at the intruder.

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?" Harry angrily asked the malicious intruder now walking nonchalantly to him.

"Now, is that a way to treat an old friend?"

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Chapter 5 - Back at Grimmauld Place

"YOU WERE NEVER MY FRIEND, MALFOY! NOR DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIEND AT ALL! YOU ONLY CARE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR DARK AMBITIONS!" Harry hollered at the pale, blond boy sneering at them.

Harry and Luna scanned the room to see if there are other unwanted visitors lurking around with both their wands clutched at the ready.

"Oh, I see you have a new girlfriend now, Potter. I never knew your taste in women could sink that low. At least Chang and the mudblood are pretty." He spat at the words. "Really! Loony!" Malfoy stared at Luna in disdain with one of his eyebrows raised. He then bio=

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"If I remember correctly, your Pansy is not that great-looker either. Maybe you need to reevaluate your sense of taste too." Luna told him clearly annoyed at his demeanor.

"Whatever." Draco just rolled his eyes at them and continued what he was doing giving the impression that the conversation had already been concluded.

"What hellish mission brought you to here, Malfoy?" Harry softly asked the intruder again. His nonchalance was quite unnerving but he knew that blowing his captive audience.

Harry and Luna looked at each other. Both refused to believe what they were hearing. It couldn't be happening, could it? Harry squeezed Luna's hand and regretted that he didn't think of learning telepathy and legilimency while he was still at the Dursleys. He then noticed an old piece of cloth near the fire place. A sudden stroke of brilliance crossed his mind. He turned to Luna and tried to communicate as silent as possible. Luna, in case we need to make a quick getaway, we'll pretend that this is a portkey. No one must know yet that I can apparate. Ok? Luna nodded.

"They put up a good fight, you know, it's just that my allies were better. I'd switch sides now really fast if I were you. I heard that the blood traitors screamed like hell when shot by the cruciatus curse. The mudblood was even worse. They told me she passed out after they made her jump from the roof, with the help of the imperius curse of course." Draco continued his tale making it sound as if he was chatting with his long lost friends about something pleasant.

"WHAT?!?" Harry was visibly tensed now. Hearing about his friends being tortured from this abomination made it even worse.

"Really, Potter! Are you deaf now, too? You shouldn't even worry about your filthy mudblood and blood traitor friends. Their utterly useless, a disgrace in the name of wizardry." Draco muttered in disdain.

"DON'T YOU SPEAK ABOUT THEM LIKE THAT! YOU VILE, CONTEMPTUOUS HEIR OF THE SATANIC MALFOY CLAN! YOU'D NEVER AMOUNT TO EVEN A STRAND OF THEIR HAIR!" Harry screamed at him letting his emotions flow. His diplomatic attempt was not working anyway.

"I'll say whatever I want, Potter. Frankly, I don't give a damn." Draco then stood up and casually paced the room to go near them. "Funny, I never would have thought that you would hang around after learning that this belongs to me now. But I guess you're more idiotic than I

give you credit for." He paused for effect before announcing. "Here are my comrades now. You sure made it easy for us, Potter."

"You wish!" Harry retorted before firing several offensive and defensive around him. Luna followed his lead but never left his side. They both decided that it would be easier if they just fight side by side.

More loud pops were heard and several cloaked figures appeared all over the place. Soon, colorful and electrifying sparks were flying around the living room as spells after spells were fired. Harry quickly counted the enemies. Nine death-eaters plus Draco. That makes the odds to ten is to two. 'This is bad.' Harry thought while continuing with the battle.

"IMPEDIMENTA!" He heard Luna shot the spell to McNair who easily deflected it and fired back a stunning spell which missed her only by an centimeter.

"STUPEFY! EXPELLIARMUS! TARANTALLEGRA!" He bombarded the advancing death-eaters with all the spells he knew.

"IMPERIO!" Lucius tried to curse Harry but was greatly disappointed when it didn't have any effect on him.

"Hey, Lucius! Didn't your old master tell you that Imperius Curse does not have any effect on me?" He mocked the seething right hand of Voldemort. "RICTUSEMPRA!"

Lucius' legs were uncontrollable for a while but quickly recovered. "You think those childish spells are enough?" He sneered at Harry. "Watch how the dark wizards fight. CRUCIO!"

Harry suddenly fell on the floor in pain but he fought not to drop his wand. He saw Luna also crumpling on the ground near him soon after she accidentally bumped to Lucius breaking his concentration on the curse. Harry rushed to Luna's side to see if she was still breathing. "PROTEGO!" He quickly fired to temporarily shield them from all the attacks.

"Luna, are you alright?" Luna nodded weakly. Both of them didn't notice that the attackers had penetrated the shield charm and were now closing in on them.

"How touching!" One of the death-eaters clapped.

Harry and Luna quickly looked up to view all the sneering but triumphant faces surrounding them.

"We meet again, Potter. Why don't you just surrender quietly and spare yourself the pain? Your young friend shall be killed eventually. Our master have no need for her." The hatred in Lucius' eyes was very evident.

"What's happening? What have you done to my friends?" Harry asked ignoring their taunts.

"Allow me, Father." Draco proudly told his father who smiled at his son's attitude. "Well, you see, Potter. Time has changed now. The loyal followers of Lord Voldemort are the ones in command now. As dim-witted as you are, you should have guessed that the Daily Prophet has now stopped operating in fear. The people behind the Quibbler are, did I say are? I meant were, very brave but of course they have already been taken care of."

Luna paled visibly at the mention of the Quibbler and her knees wobbled slightly but she stood her ground. Harry was impressed by her strength. He thought she would break down when she heard Draco's taunts but she was stronger than she thought.

"I think Hogwarts has already been destroyed after several attacks from my friends. You better start thinking of transferring to another school now. Need I say more? Or have you finally grasped the obvious? As for Ginny ----" He was suddenly cut off by his father and did not looked pleased with it.

"That's enough, Draco. McNair, dispose of the girl properly. Goyle, grab the boy and follow me." Lucius barked his orders not wanting to waste anymore time.

Harry glanced at Luna and silently signaled that it was time. "WAIT!" They shouted at the approaching death-eaters.

"WHAT?" The enemies asked in unison.

"Ever heard of a portkey?"

"NNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

"WHAT?!?"

"But how?"

Harry and Luna both smiled triumphantly at them showing the old piece of cloth. They only managed to witness the look of panic, surprise and despair on their faces before feeling the familiar tug on their navels as they apparated. As their feet landed firmly on the ground, both of them surveyed their surroundings again hoping that there were no death-eaters waiting for them. They sighed in relief when they found no one. They didn't think they have enough strength to fight now.

"Where are we, Harry" Luna finally asked him.

The scene before them was terrible. The walls are destroyed and the parts that were still standing were covered with dirt and blood. Tables were turned and the chairs were broken into pieces. The windows were also scattered into pieces. Statues were knocked down. The place looked like a palace that faced a battle and lost. It was quite depressing..

When Harry didn't answer, Luna continued her observation. "You know, if this place does not look so devastated, I would say that we are at Hogwarts."

Harry was crestfallen as he replied. "Luna, before we apparated, I was thinking of Hogwarts."

Chapter 6 - At the Room of Requirements

"HOGWARTS?!?" Luna exclaimed at him before collapsing to the ground.

Harry stared helpless at the crumpled figure while furiously trying to think of a place where they can temporarily take refuge. He suddenly felt angry tears rushing to the surface. 'Why is all happening?' He thought.

'It's because of Voldemort that's why you must defeat him to stop darkness from taking over.' A familiar voice rang on his head. 'Remember, you are the only one who can defeat him but you need your friends. Find them.'

'Yes, I should find my friends. But where?' He thought again while wondering how he could make this conversation from his mind. 'Maybe I'm going crazy'.

'You're as sane as I am. In time, you will discover all your hidden powers but first, try to find them. I can't tell you because Voldemort might be reading my mind now. I'm weak and I might not be able to repel him much longer. Think of the place where you can find almost anything....a place that changes itself to fit your purpose.' With that, the voice was gone.

"Of course, why didn't I think of that before? Thank you, Professor Dumbledore." He whispered to himself.

"Harry, what are we going to do now?" Harry was surprised to find Luna at her feet now without her usual glassy expression. If anything, he could only find acceptance and grim determination there. For the first time, he noticed that she had grown a little taller and her figure was now quite pleasing to the eyes. The string of butterbeer caps she usually wore on her neck was gone but her blond hair that almost hid her face made her look more mysterious. She looked pretty. He quickly averted his gaze. He should not be looking at Luna this way. It was not the time for this kind of thing.

"Why? Is there something wrong?" She asked him gently.

"No, no. What happened to your necklace?" He shook his head to cover his embarrassment.

"Oh, I got rid of it last summer. It was a remembrance from my mother but I had to move on. No sense in dwelling in dreams." She casually replied with a toss of her long, blond hair.

'No sense in dwelling with dreams.' Her words echoed in Harry's mind. That was what Dumbledore had told him a few years back when he caught him returning everyday to the Mirror of Erised. "You're right, Luna. But first, we need to find our friends." A new found courage and determination filled his heart.

"But where---?"

"In the Room of Requirements. Come on." Harry grabbed her hand and they both ran to the seventh floor of the palace thankful that not all of Hogwarts had been destroyed.

They cautiously entered the Room of Requirements and was surprised to see so many people there, most of them young. Some injured were being treated on make shift beds but the others were still sleeping. A wizard carefully approached them with his wand pointed on their direction.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" The wizard roughly demanded.

"I'm Harry Potter and this is Luna Lovegood. We're here to find our friends." Harry quickly introduced themselves and showed his scar for proper identification. The wizard lowered his wand

"Very well. I apologize for being rude. It's just that darkness is everywhere and we can't be sure on who to trust anymore. By the way, I'm Professor Leninski from Durmstrang. Our school has also been attacked and Professor Dumbledore had been kind enough to give us shelter. The students and teachers from Hogwarts are staying on the other side of the room."

Harry and Luna shook his hand politely and went to the other side of the room. Only ten students, two Hogwarts professors and the

school nurse were there. Lavender, Hermione, Padma, Pavarti and Cho were sleeping on one bed on the left. Colin, Dennis, Seamus, Lee and Ron were on the other bed. Madam Pomphrey was busy concocting some potion while Professor McGonagall and Madam Hooch were busy discussing something on hushed voices. No one had noticed their presence yet.

"Professor McGonagall?" Harry tentatively said to announce their arrival. He reckoned it would not be polite if they just hop on the bed and sleep their weariness off.

Both professors turned their heads at once and rushed to their side. Harry noticed that the teachers looked haggard as if they had not slept in days....even Madam Hooch was not looking as peaky as usual. The stern expression of Professor McGonagall was quickly replaced with relief and excitement when they saw the new arrivals.

"Harry...Luna....I'm glad that you're both alive. What happened to you?" Harry could swear that McGonagall's eyes had gone misty at the sight of him.

"Professor, we got attacked by death-eaters....---"

"Is it true that Draco owns the ----?"

Harry and Luna started answering at the same time. They turned to one another. The professors just seemed perplexed.

"Calm down...Miss Lovegood, you go first. Please start from the beginning." Madam Hooch stated quietly with her eyes darted to the sleeping students indicating that she did not want to disturb them with their conversation. Madam Pomphrey had noticed them however and walked over to join them.

"Well, Professors, I went to Harry's place then we apparated ----"

"Hold on, not one of you can apparate yet!" Professor McGonagall exclaimed in a hushed voice.

"That was my doing, Professor. I just thought it would be faster."

"Go on, Miss Lovegood." The professor just prompted Luna to continue.

"We apparated to Grimmauld Place, then we found Draco there...then several Death-eaters appeared and attacked us....then just when we were cornered, Harry apparated the both us to Hogwarts....but they don't know that, Professor. We pretended that we were using a portkey." Luna's eyes were cloudy as she recounted the day's events.

"Professors, Draco and the other death-eaters told us the worst. Is our situation really that bad? Does Draco really own Sirius' house now?" Harry ignored the painful throb on his shoulders where a curse had hit him a while ago. He noticed that the Professors looked meaningfully at each other before answering his queries.

"We are on a very difficult position now, Mr. Potter. Innumerable aurors and wizards had been captured and killed during the countless attacks that the death-eaters launched last summer. It had been fortunate enough that we were able to send students staying at the headquarters to this place right before the enemies attacked it...." Professor McGonagall suddenly stopped as if pondering if she should continue. Harry stared at her and was surprised that he could read her thoughts. 'Shall I tell Harry about Dumbledore and Ginny?' She seemed to be debating with herself.

"What about Ginny and Professor Dumbledore?" Harry promptly asked her. The three adults turned to him in surprise.

"How did you know?" Madam Pomphrey wondered.

"We don't know anything. I just remembered what Draco said a while ago before he was cut off by Lucius." Well, that was near the truth, Harry thought although he still couldn't believe that he could read their minds.

"I think both of you had enough for today. Why don't you sleep first?" Professor McGonagall tried to evade the topic.

"I think it would be better if you tell us now, Professor. We would not be able to sleep without knowing first. Besides, knowing the real situation is the first way into solving a problem." Luna pressed them

politely using pure logic like a true Ravenclaw to win her case. Harry squeezed her hand in gratitude. He was afraid his temper would get the better of him if he would be the one to insist.

The professor sighed again. "As much as I wanted to withhold some information, Luna was correct. You have to know. Times have changed and you have to be equipped for the battle in our midst...." She paused and took a deep breath before she continued. "Dumbledore and Ginny were captured. We don't know what's happening to them now. Dumbledore can take care of himself but Ginny....I shudder to think what they might be doing to her now....The Weasleys are distraught." The professor finally broke down and left to seek refuge on a dark corner of the room leaving both of them with Madam Hooch and Madam Pomphrey who were also shaking in grief and desperation.

Harry felt numb for a moment. 'Ginny! Why her?!? What do they want from her?' He felt Luna hug him and they decided that it was time for them to rest. Today had been a long day and tomorrow might be longer. They need their strength.

Chapter 7 - The Reformation of Dumbledore's Army

"CONSTANT VIGILANCE, POTTER!"

Harry was still pondering on Mad-Eye Moody's favorite expression when he suddenly felt the bed vibrating furiously. Startled out of his wits, Harry jumped from the bed, drew his wand out and scrambled to find his glasses that fell on the floor in his haste. He was about to launch his first defensive spell for the day when he noticed Lee Jordan and Seamus Finnegan clutching their stomach trying to control their laughter while Hermione Granger and Luna Lovegood glared furiously at them.

"Glad you find that amusing." Harry snorted at them as he hid his wand.

"You should have seen your face, mate. Hahahaha!"

"That is not funny, you morons!" Hermione snarled angrily at them.

"Yeah, well, I honestly thought we were being attacked or something and given the situation ---"

"Given the situation, we might as well put a little color to our lives or else, we would all go crazy here." Seamus butted in seriously.

No one said a word for a moment. Suddenly, they were all reminded of the horror that they were living now...the memory that they all wished to forget and hoped that they were all just a part of dream that can be sent to oblivion after several months or years. The girls suddenly regretted reprimanding Lee and Seamus. Hermione broke the silence.

"So, who brought you here?" She asked Harry and Luna.

"Harry apparated both of us here after battling with several death-eaters at the headquarters of....what's that again? Order....something like that." Luna answered casually as if it was an everyday occurrence.

"B-but.....you can't apparate to Hogwarts...how?" Hermione stammered in surprise.

"That's what Professor McGonagall said last night....but if I recall correctly, you cannot apparate to the headquarters either....but the death-eaters did." Harry answered thoughtfully apparently puzzled too about what happened. "But I'm glad I forgot about that little piece of information or I wouldn't have attempted to go here in the first place."

"The Malfoy brat told us that the security of the headquarters was weakened when Sirius died so maybe something similar happened to Hogwarts." Luna added. Hermione looked thoughtful. The others were silent too.

"So what happened here? Professor McGonagall told us something about Dumbledore and Ginny being captured...." Harry's eyes scanned the room to find Ron, his best friend and Ginny's brother but he was nowhere to be found. Hermione followed where his eyes led and quickly averted his gaze.

"Ron is too devastated after what happened and he blames himself for not being able to save his sister. He is with Madam Pomphrey now. She is treating him with some calming potion so he won't do something foolish." Hermione answered his unspoken question dejectedly.

The Patil twins and the others soon joined the conversation and together, they shared with Harry and Luna the events that resulted to making the room of requirements their temporary headquarters. Several parents, including those staying at Grimmauld Place, decided to send their children to Hogwarts a month early to ensure the safety of their kids. Dumbledore agreed and they were all able to settle there. However, after a few days, something urgent came up and Dumbledore and some other professors had to leave the castle in haste.

That was the time when the Death-eaters sneaked into Hogwarts. Some used the passage from the cellar of Honeydukes obviously led by Wormtail, one of the creators of the Marauders' Map so he knew

all the secret paths to the school, and some entered the ordinary way like Lucius. Some were outside and barraged the school with complex spells to weaken the barriers. The students and remaining professors fiercely fought but their strengths were no match for their attackers. Soon, Hogwarts was in their control and all the people inside were captured.

Dumbledore arrived a few minutes later and bartered for the captives lives in exchange for his. The death-eaters immediately agreed of course. Even if they were not able to capture Harry, at least they got his mentor. It was only after Dumbledore conjured a portkey and sent us all to Grimmauld Place that they noticed that Ginny was missing. Some professors went back but to the castle but did not find her leading to the conclusion that the death-eaters did not release her like the others. It was only confirmed though after the next attack.

Apparently, Voldemort was impatient already and ordered another attack at Sirius' house. Somehow, Dumbledore sent a warning there and gave the residents an opportunity to escape. Order members sent the children and some professors back to Hogwarts to hide in the Room of Requirements and destroyed the floo connection to prevent death-eaters from following them.

"So that's what happened....." Harry shook his head in amazement...but a nagging thought entered his mind again. "How could Dumbledore let himself be captured without a fight? He could have gotten them all within seconds like what happened in the Department of Mysteries...."

"That's what's bothering us too." They all looked around to find Ron nodding his head solemnly. "Dumbledore is very powerful but he let it happen...why?"

"Are you all right, Ron?" Hermione rushed to his side immediately.

"Yeah, Harry's here. I should not let my best friend find me here in a state of distress. I would just die of embarrassment.." He smiled weakly and hugged his best friend.

"RON!!!!" Hermione exclaimed at him clearly put off by his reasoning.

"No, Hermione, just joking. Actually, Madam Pomphrey had convinced me that moaning and blaming myself will just make matters worse. Now that Harry's here maybe we can do something useful for once." Ron looked expectantly at Harry as if he was hoping for something miraculous to happen. Harry and others just looked hurt and dumbfounded at him. "No offense guys, it's just that he's my best mate. We went through a lot together and having him here with me added a boost to my morale." He quickly explained.

"That's ok, Ron. We understand. As for Dumbledore, it's bothering me, too. It can't be real but maybe he has his reasons...so let's leave it at that for a while....ok?" Hermione told everyone.

"What about Ginny though? What's the purpose of getting her?" Parvati asked ignoring the warning looks from Hermione.

"Maybe it's because the death-eaters thought that Ginny and Harry are romantically involved and he would go to any lengths to save her including bartering his life for hers...." Cho said seemingly hurt at the prospect of it being true while everyone stared at her and Harry.

"But it's not true! We are just friends and I treat her like a sister." Harry exclaimed in disbelief. He noticed that Cho sighed in relief.

"Yes, we know that and I think it would be best if we don't divulge that information yet or they might just kill Ginny if they found out that they were wrong. I wonder where they got the idea, though." Hermione stated quietly.

"Maybe they heard my conversation with Ginny when they attacked us." Colin rubbed his forehead as if trying to recall the exact scene. The others waited for him to continue. "Well, we were just joking around and Ginny was pretending that Harry and her are a couple ---"

"She what?!?" Ron suddenly exclaimed not daring to believe that his sister could such a ridiculous thing.

"Mmmm.....yeah, b-but we were just joking around....acting some make-believe situations....like a movie or play or something...she did

not mean it, honest...we were just having some fun..." Colin continued nervously and cringed at the sight of a red-faced angry brother of Ginny.

"That's enough...That's enough....It's just a mistake...let's just hope that Ginny is smart enough not to let on that it was just an act." Hermione raised her voice to prevent everyone from making another comment. Harry opened his mouth to speak but changed his mind but Ron couldn't be stopped.

"So what do we do now?" Ron demanded angrily at them. Another stony silence greeted his words. Hermione bit her lip trying to think of something. The Creevey brothers suddenly found their torn blue socks very interesting. Others just stared into space until a strong voice dared answer the question.

"We form Dumbledore's Army again." Everyone looked at Luna as she spoke of the words. "With Dumbledore gone, we need to defend ourselves and the others....we need to master complex spells if we even hope to defeat Voldemort....we need to unite for without it, we shall easily be defeated." Everyone stared dumbfounded at her. They never heard Luna speak this way before. To them, she was just Loony - a dreamer, someone whose sense of reality was utterly questionable, but here she was giving them an obvious answer that they should have realized before.

Harry was impressed too by Luna's words. He already guessed that behind that Loony facade was a girl full of wisdom but he never thought that she could also be this strong and determined to fight evil....but maybe he should have realized that already after she, the only one in the group that was not from Gryffindor, went to help him rescue Sirius even if she did not know how important he is to him at the time. And then, the battle at Grimmauld Place, she held her place and never cried once even after the taunts about her father. She stood her ground. She was amazing....

"Luna's right. We must reconvene all the members and we'll try to train on some complex spells first before we do anything else. We need to prepare. Hermione, do you have any idea how to contact the others? I noticed you found it hard to communicate with me given the

condition but maybe we can find a way to contact the others and bring them here." Harry assumed his status of leader of the DA and tried to induce a sense of organization to the others. "I see, all of us here are members, so....we just need to contact the rest of the members and see if they are willing to join us again. Then we can start the training. Do you all agree?"

Everyone nodded their agreement at once and hurried to their trunks to get their spell books and wands. Harry was now thinking of where they can train given so many people were staying there. Luna just stayed with him while she too was lost in her own thoughts. Ron and Hermione were busy reading something that may help them find a way to communicate with the others. Nobody noticed the bespectacled cat hiding under a bed, observing and listening to their every word.

Chapter 8 - A Page from the Order's Record Book

"Mr. Potter, may I speak with you for a moment?" said Professor McGonagall, walking soundlessly, very cat-like, to where Harry and Luna were sitting. Harry nodded and followed the Deputy Headmistress to her table and sat on the nearest chair while the professor looked curiously at him.

"What is it, Professor?" asked Harry, wondering if she had overheard them talking. He made a mental note to find a more discreet way of organizing the DA because the adult wizards would never allow them to fight, not yet.

"I wish to speak with you about the secret defense group you formed last year. As the Order's resources are very much strained nowadays, we could not cover all territories and as we unfortunately realized before, we cannot always be here to defend the students. We need as many trained defenders as we can possibly have to regain our world." said Professor McGonagall, leafing through some book filled with writings that Harry couldn't quite understand.

'Apparently, I was wrong.' thought Harry in amusement, wondering where the conversation will lead to.

"The Order is requesting you to reform Dumbledore's Army and train them very well and defensive and offensive spells." continued Professor McGonagall, staring intently at Harry's eyes.

"I - I...of course, Professor....anything to help." said Harry in surprise.

Professor McGonagall sighed in relief. "Thank you, Mr. Potter. We have been wanting to do that but we couldn't seem to find time for it. We were contemplating on requesting Hermione to do it, but the rest of the Order seem to think your original structure is better. Besides, we were not sure yet if the rest of you would want to do it but now that you're here, you will be able to find out for yourself how much support you got. Don't worry, your friends will help you organize things." she said, implying that Harry must need to develop his eye for detail soon. Leaders must try not to leave any stones unturned. for one simple mistake might be fatal to all.

"Don't worry, Professor, we'll make sure that we will do our best to help our world return to normal." said Harry seriously.

"Very well, then. Off you go....but before you leave, I want you to have this." said the professor, handing a piece of parchment to Harry's outstretched hand. "That's a copy of a page from the Order's record book. It contains the general situation of the wizarding world. Use those information wisely."

Harry's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as he read the paper.

"And Harry ---"

"Yes, professor?"

"Please don't hesitate to talk to us or ask for our help if you needed it. Never try to place the burden of saving the world on your shoulders alone. It's our world too and we will help you no matter what happens...remember that..."

Harry nodded solemnly and walked towards his friends, clutching the parchment tightly on his right fist. He called for a meeting immediately. As the group gathered around him, he started to tell them about the Order's request, explaining about the Order of the Phoenix to the others who do not know anything about it yet. Finally, he requested Hermione to read the paper for them.

GENERAL SITUATION OF THE WIZARDING WORLD

1. All wizarding schools attacked by the death-eaters - 36 dead, 215 injured

2. Ottery St. Catchpole - attacked, 15 injured, none dead...all relocated.

3. Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley - markets closed due to numerous attacks, no concrete figures of casualties yet; Weasley's Wizard Wheezes - operating in stealth.

4. Daily Prophet stopped operating to avoid the attacks
5. Quibbler bravely reported all the incidents but stopped after the disappearance of its editor - no information about his whereabouts yet.
6. Minister of Magic - resigned after receiving thousands of hate-mails from people who were not able to prepare for war because of the false information he fed them
7. Ministry of Magic - currently in chaos because of the sudden loss of the Minister, no one is brave enough to take the position yet.
8. Dumbledore and Ginny - captured but still alive.
9. #12 Grimmauld Place - attacked but damage was lessened by Dumbledore's warning.
10. Harry Potter - currently developing his powers - an order member needs to talk to him about this soon.
11. Aurors - reduced by half - need to develop the skills of other wizards
12. Victims of the dementor's attack on a certain wizard village 40 years ago - need to find a way for them to regain their powers. Most of them were powerful wizards and would be able to help us in this war.

The DA members just listened intently. The news did not come as a shock anymore. After all, they already know the situation was very bad due to the fact that they were hiding. But the last bit of information came as a nice surprise. They never knew that and it was not written in the books. They wondered how many of those victims could actually contribute to their cause.

"Aunt Petunia!" gasped Harry. The others turned to him at once, eyebrows raising in question.

"She was one of those victims....she was telling the truth....she was a

witch." said Harry who, until now, had not realized that he had some doubt on his aunt's words. "She asked for my help to get it back....she wants to help too..."

"WHAT?!? THAT WOMAN THAT TREATED YOU LIKE DIRT?!?" exclaimed Ron. "NO WAY!"

"RON!" Hermione chided him impatiently. "Will you stop being stubborn for once? We need as much help as we can get and if she's willing, then so be it."

"Did she give you any information on how to do it? asked Luna, steering the conversation from an impending argument.

"She said something about defeating the king of Dementors but I have no idea how to do it yet." said Harry, thanking Luna silently for her distraction.

"Let's see, maybe a patronus' kiss or something. The patronus sucks the power and give it back to its owner. What do you think?" said Lee.

"I don't know. There's no such thing...in the books I read at least." said Hermione weakly, annoyed that she did not know the answer to this one.

"It's because it was not written in the new books." Everyone turned to Cho who suddenly blushed. "You see, it's an old magic and probably listed in the old books only. My grandmother told me about it once but she said only a corporeal patronus conjured by a very powerful wizard can pull it off."

"Well, that settles it then. Hermione and Cho, you take charge of researching on that. Lee, Seamus, Colin and Dennis, I believe you are ingenious enough to take care of contacting the others. Luna, Ron and I are going to plan some strategies." said Harry.

"What about us? What are we going to do?" moaned Lavender, Padma and Parvati at once.

"Er --" said Harry, racking his mind for anything that he can assign to

the three. "Umm....you can research on some very advanced spells that we can use and er...um....you can roam around the room and try to search for students here who might be willing to join us..."

"Oh, thanks Harry. We like that!" answered the three.

"And....er--maybe you can help the others after you finish your own task?" Harry pleaded silently to Hermione and Cho. They both nodded, not needing any explanation.

"Let's get going, then!" exclaimed Ron suddenly, glad that they can finally do something of importance.

"YEAH!" Dumbledore's Army returns!" They all shouted in excitement.

From one dark corner of the room, the bespectacled cat smiled at their progress and quietly left the room.

Chapter 9 - The Three Urgent Tasks

The formation of Dumbledore's Army rekindled a fire in the hearts of the young wizards. They promptly fulfilled the tasks assigned to them, much to the annoyance of the other people in the room who seemed to think that they were just wasting their time (In which Ron angrily retorted with a nasty, "Oh, yeah, you think so? Why don't you just go out there and die willingly?") and within 48 hours, another meeting was called to finalize the plans.

"Listen, comrades-in-wands," everyone groaned at the term. Harry smiled. "Just joking but hey, I like the sound of that. Let's hear the outcome of your tasks first. Hermione?"

Hermione stood up promptly and read clearly, "Patronus kiss should only be administered to the King of Dementors, in our case it was called 'Demeter'. The spell is 'Patrono Halkum' but only the chosen one could do that. The essence of the kiss should then be incorporated with a special power revival potion which Cho and I will be working on. The only tricky part is locating all those victims and finding the wizard village where they came from for the potion to work. As of now, we don't know the name of the village yet and even Professor McGonagall has already forgotten the place."

"Professor McGonagall also said that those wizards had their memories modified so they might not even be willing to do it. The village was magically wiped out from the books and since the place was unplotable, it is quite impossible for us to go there" added Cho.

"No, it's not." said Harry quietly. "You're forgetting what I said earlier. My Aunt Petunia was one of them. She lived in that village and the memory charm was lifted when she took me."

"Oh!" was all Hermione and Cho said.

"That's ok, guys. What about your group, Lee?" said Harry, noticing that the four boys were already itching to report.

"Hey, the task was harder than we thought but.....of course, we're geniuses!" exclaimed Lee triumphantly. Seamus, Colin and Dennis

were grinning from ear to ear, clearly proud of their accomplishment.

"Yeah, who would have thought that the house-elves could do so much...." said Colin.

"Wicked! I ---" Dennis suddenly stopped when he noticed Hermione's cold expression.

"Chill out, Hermione. It's not as if we're exploiting them or something. They wanted to help...they really do...and they chose to do it. We did not force them." said Seamus cautiously. He knew that Hermione was quite touchy about elf rights but it was different if the house-elves themselves chose to help them. Hell, they need every help they can get, he thought.

"Ok, then. So how exactly are they helping us?" Hermione asked, not entirely convinced of their logic yet.

"Well, from talking to Dobby, we figured that the house-elves can be turned into a very effective spy network. There are house elves all over the world and their own brand of magic allow them to communicate with one another without alerting the wizards. Aside from that, they can also get past any anti-apparition barriers. You get the picture?" Lee paused before continuing. "We then requested Dobby and some of his trusted friends to locate the remaining members of the DA and personally give them the letters informing that DA has returned and that if they still wish to be part of us again, they have to give their reply immediately to the house-elf that delivered the message."

"And?" prompted Harry.

"Why do you think we're so excited? Of course, we got them all!" said Seamus eagerly, signaling Colin and Dennis to show them the letters. "Apparently, they were also hiding in some underground unplotable safe houses built during the previous reign of Voldemort."

"WHOA!" exclaimed the astounded DA members.

"Wicked!" said Ron.

"How come there are only 15 of them? We have 29 members, the letters should be 16." said Hermione, trying to recall who among the previous members, except Ginny, had not replied.

"Er ---um....." All turned at once to the small boy awkwardly wringing his hands. "We sort of....uh---forgotten to include Marietta Edgecombe in the list we gave the house-elves." muttered Dennis quickly. "Since she umm.....snitched on us last year.....we figured it would be best if she's not here for now." he added hastily.

Harry nodded thoughtfully. "What do you think, guys?" he asked the group, carefully eyeing their reactions.

"I think whatever she had done last year, we should give her a chance." said Hermione firmly.

"NO WAY!" Ron vehemently said. He couldn't quite forgive her yet.

"We think Hermione's right." said Lavender and Parvati.

"It's quite hard to decide. After all, detention is not the only thing at stake here but she's my friend." said Cho weakly. Padma also nodded in agreement.

"So that's 5 votes for 'yes; and 5 votes for 'no'. Luna, what do you think?" asked Harry.

Luna looked taken aback for a moment before she replied, "I think Hermione's right. We should give her a chance but.... not right now. We have to observe first and make sure that she will not betray us a second time before we approach her again."

"Brilliant! Do you all agree?"asked Harry, smiling at Luna. The others reluctantly nodded. "So, that brings us to the last group. Parvati, what have you got so far?

"Not good. The polite ones just ignored us but the others downright insulted our efforts. There is one from Durmstrang and two from Beaxbatons who seemed interested but they are not feeling too brave

at the moment though. Maybe we just have to wait." explained Lavender, feeling more downhearted as she read her report.

"That's okay, Lavender. We should have expected that. They will refuse to join us now because we have not proven anything yet. To them, we are just a bunch of foolish kids pulling a very dangerous prank. Don't worry, they'll come around. We just have to be patient and explain some more." said Harry, consoling the disheartened member.

"You're right, Harry. It's just that so many rejections were quite traumatic for us." moaned Parvati.

"We'll just continue to convince the three who were interested and then leave the others for later. By the way, here is the list of the most useful spells that we need to master as soon as possible." said Padma, handing each of the members a copy of the spells complete with the incantations, correct wand movements and their uses.

"Thanks!." said Harry, putting a copy in the pocket of his trousers, "All of your reports will be very helpful to the general plan that Ron, Luna and I had drafted last night. The plan had been streamlined to three urgent tasks. First, we must bring Aunt Petunia here immediately. I need at least two other people who could already do some advanced magic to go with me. We reckoned it would be best if we always work collectively, in a group of 3 people or more. Who would be willing to join me?" he saw all of them raise their hands. "No, not all of us yet. It shall be carried out tomorrow morning already. No time to train first that's why I need those who can perform advanced magic already. Lee and Luna can go with me. Sorry, Ron." He apologized quickly to his bestfriend who seemed hurt that he didn't choose him to join the first team.

"Why Luna? She's one year younger than us..." Parvati pointed out.

"Yes, I know but after arriving at our house without so much of a scratch, I think she's up to the challenge." said Harry.

"Oh! Okay."

"The second task is to bring all the other members here, target schedule is next week. We all need to train religiously before that date because all of us will be going....unless someone wants to stay, of course." he grinned as the others groan in mock protest. "Ron will unite all the teams later after we have studied the report of Lee's group."

"As for the third task, we will all undergo another extensive training on battle related spells including advanced apparition..." he paused. "...and wandless magic..." The others gasped in wonder.

"But who will teach us?" asked Hermione.

"Is it really possible?" asked Colin.

"Yes, it is possible. Aunt Petunia will assist me in teaching you. She's more familiar with it. Actually, she was the one who taught me how." said Harry, levitating a chair without a wand to demonstrate.

"Cool! Why didn't you use that when we were at Grimmauld Place?" asked Luna suddenly.

"Because I don't want them to know yet and ----" Harry was suddenly interrupted by Madam Hooch's shout of "Dinner's ready!" "...it seemed that dinner's ready so we have to stop this meeting right now. I'm starving!" he playfully ran to the make-shift dining place. Several 'so-am- I's' followed him and one very large foot almost crushed his foot in haste.

"Luna, Lee, please meet me after dinner tonight at that part of the room." Harry whispered to them as they sat on their respective places. He pointed to the sofa near Professor McGonagall's table but discreetly hidden behind a shelf of books. "We'll finalize our rescue plan for tomorrow, okay?"

"Are you out of your mind? Of course, it's okay!" said Lee excitedly while Luna just nodded and smiled gently at Harry who suddenly felt lighthearted and cheerful despite of everything.

Chapter 10 - The Unexpected Arrival of the Dursleys and the Auror Trial

"As I was saying, we need to go back to the Dursleys and bring them here. No problem with that because I can apparate us all back here but...the problem is if we encounter some death-eaters along the way..." said Harry quietly.

"What about extra protection....invisibility cloak or something?" asked Lee.

"We can use the disillusionment charm for that. It's safer and besides, we left some of our things at the Order's head ---"

"PROFESSOR MCGONAGALL! Potter's missing! Some death-eaters attacked the Dursleys..." said a panicky female voice from behind.

"We were able to fend them off but the woman said Potter left a few days ago..." growled another, unmistakably Moody's.

"Mummy! Mummy! Why did they bring us here? They're not going to kill us, are they?" cried a boy whose voice was muffled.

The three peered from behind to find out who the new arrivals were. Harry saw the Dursleys immediately. His uncle was clearly terrified but tried hard to hide what he thought was indignity on his part while his aunt was undeniably distraught. His cousin was hiding behind his mother's dress, destroying his reputation of being a notorious bully. He recognized Tonks and Moody too who seemed ready to have a heart attack.

"Calm down. Potter's here." said Professor McGonagall calmly, motioning them all to sit down and make themselves comfortable.

'So, she doesn't have any contact from the order too aside from if they come here personally.' noted Harry.

"WHAT?!?" exclaimed Moody, his eyes rotating 360 degrees until he found Harry, Luna and Lee staring cautiously at them.

"But Professor, we guarded him tightly and we are sure he did not leave the house." protested Tonks, feeling bad at their failure.

"I've been telling you that he can apparate but you won't listen." argued Aunt Petunia. "I also taught him how to use wandless magic ..."

"PETUNIA!" screamed Uncle Vernon who seemed to have forgotten his anxiety as he berated his wife for letting the forbidden words escape her lips.

Harry quickly strode to his aunt's side. Luna and Lee came out of the shadows too and discreetly went to join the other DA members to give them some privacy.

"Explain yourself, Potter." said Moody, glaring at him for causing them so much stress.

"I'm sorry Professor Moody, Tonks...I forgot that about the order members watching over the house. You see, after being endlessly frustrated at the lack of news, I started to make good use of my time. I taught myself how to apparate and Aunt Petunia, being one of the victims of a dementors attack before, taught me how to perform wandless magic from memory." said Harry.

Harry quickly told them a heavily edited version of the incidents after he and Luna left Privet Drive to visit Grimmauld Place. His story was greeted with shock, amazement and incredulity from his captive audience. He also shared with them the DA's plan of rescuing the Dursleys but he did not tell them the reason why. Mad-eye Moody shot him a questioning look but did not press on. Harry smiled at him in relief. For some reason, he did not want his uncle and cousin to know about it.

"Excuse me, Mr. Potter but I think your relatives need to rest for now. I'll take them first to their cubicle." interrupted Professor McGonagall.

"No, Minerva, if you don't mind, I wish to stay." said Aunt Petunia, surprising them all but Harry who seemed to know more than he was letting on. Vernon tapped his foot impatiently but left with his son

when he realized that his wife was not going to change her mind.

"So, Potter, what's the real plan?" asked Tonks after they left.

"We wanted to bring Aunt Petunia so that she can tell us more about the dementor's attack on a wizard village forty years ago. We wanted to give her and other victims their powers back so that they can help us win this war." said Harry confidently, giving the impression that it was something that had already been thoroughly discussed by the DA members.

Harry was startled when his aunt suddenly hugged him and murmured a soft 'thanks' to him. Tonks and Moody gaped at him in shock but Professor McGonagall just encouraged him to go on. He then continued telling them about the Patronus kiss, Demeter, bringing the other DA members and their plan to train for battle.

"So basically, auror training eh?" questioned Moody, eyeing him intently.

"Yeah, something to that effect. We cannot go on hiding forever and the Order do not have enough members to protect us all the time. Let's face it. We have to train for war because WE are at war." said Harry, determination etched on his young face.

Moody carefully assessed the young man in front of him and paused for what seemed like eternity before he replied, "Very well, then. If you all can get back here alive and without any major injuries, I will train you myself. But, if you fail, you will forget all about it. Consider this your entry test to auror training."

"We'll help, too." said Tonks, looking at Professor McGonagall for confirmation. She briefly nodded.

"Thank you. Don't worry, we will not fail." said Harry confidently.

"Don't be too sure about anything, Potter." growled Moody. "When is it again?"

"Next Monday."

"Okay, we'll be back that day and make sure you're all in one piece."
With that, Professor Moody and Tonks swished their cloaks and
disapparated to heaven knows where.

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"INCENDIO!" shouted Seamus, sending a chair on fire, surprising
even himself at his progress.

"PETRIFICUS TOTALUS!" screamed Parvati at Lavender who
immediately fell after being hit by the body-bind curse.

"Accio wands!" said Lee almost lazily, sending the wands of Colin
and Dennis flying to him. He grinned wickedly as he returned their
wands.

Colorful sparks flew around hitting and deflecting the walls and
dummies strategically placed within the training room. The group
started their own training to prepare for the second mission. Harry
told them about Moody's challenge and that encouraged them to do
their best. Professor McGonagall and Madam Hooch built a solid
room within the Room of Requirements (which magically expanded)
which served as their training ground. They put a silencing charm on
the room so as not to distract the other occupants.

"HYDRO-OXIDUS!" shouted Ron, immediately pinning Hermione on
the wall with the strong water cannon charm he conjured. He quickly
stopped the spell and rushed to the nearly drowning Hermione.

"Good one, Ron! That was very powerful!" exclaimed Hermione at
once, proud at her bestfriends progress. Harry gave him a thumbs up
from across the room.

"PROTEGO!" cried Luna as Harry hit her with the cruciatus curse.
The effect of the spell was minimized but still made her writhe in pain.
The others stopped what they were doing and gaped questioningly at
Harry.

"Harry! It's illegal! We should not be doing that!" exclaimed Hermione at once.

"Finite Incantatem!" Luna stood up at once. Harry continued explain, "Yes, I know, but charging from experience, death-eaters prefer using unforgivable curses on their enemies. We need to learn how to counter those curses."

"B-but ---those are illegal." Hermione stated weakly. Ron nudged her lightly, shutting her up.

"Never stopped the death-eaters, did it?" said Harry mildly. "Let's pair up again and practice defending ourselves against those spells, particularly the imperius curse. I'm sure none of us would enjoy being controlled by the enemies. Like this..IMPERIO!" shouted Harry unexpectedly at the unprepared Seamus.

Everyone stared in amazement as they witnessed how Seamus climbed the wall, breakdanced on the floor, declared his undying love for Lavender, and stunned Colin. The others glared at Harry for this.

"Please don't be mad at me." pleaded Harry gently. "It's just to show how the imperius curse works. It controls the mind of the person completely and if ordered, they will not hesitate to hurt even the ones they love most." His friends nodded in understanding. He released Seamus from his control and instructed the others on what to do.

After several days of rigorous training, all became adept at fighting the imperius curse, even young Dennis who seemed so weak at first could totally throw it off. Disillusionment charm was a cinch but apparition was met with some difficulty. But all were able to apparate quite well eventually though not as good as Harry yet who could not only apparate other people with him but also pass anti-apparition barriers. Their shield charm also became stronger. They discovered that if they conjure the spell spell together, it will form a shield strong enough to repel unforgivable curses completely.

The next morning, Ron called for a meeting to discuss their strategies.

"Here is the group list. We separated them according to their relative

distance from each other. The house-elves are going to guide us to their location so we don't have to worry about that." said Ron, handing each of them a copy of the grouping. "I trust that any personal differences shall be ignored at this moment. Is there any problem with the grouping?"

Group#1: Harry, Luna, Dennis - Hannah, Katie, Susan, Terry

Group#2: Ron, Lavender, Padma - Angelina, Ernie, Zacharias,

Alicia Group#3: Hermione, Parvati, Seamus - Dean, Fred, George, Neville

Group#4: Lee, Colin, Cho - Michael, Anthony, Justin

"The team leaders are Harry, Ron, Hermione and Lee. Are you ok with that?" said Luna. The others nodded in assent.

"Since this room and their location have anti-apparition barriers, we need to go to Hogsmeade first and apparate from there to a point near the safe- houses and bring the other members there before apparating back to Hogsmeade. Okay?" said Ron.

"But how do we go to Hogsmeade?" asked Seamus.

"The same way that the Death-eaters came here, of course." said Lee.

"Wouldn't it be safer if Harry just apparate us to the place?" asked Cho.

"Yes, it would be safer but we wouldn't learn that way. We didn't train like madmen here if we're just going to let Harry do all the work." said Ron heatedly.

"That's good enough. By the way, Cho and I made another batch of fake galleons and put a more advanced protean charm there. If before, it only tells the date and time of the DA meetings now it can inform us if any of our friends are in danger." said Hermione to distract Ron, giving each of them a fake galleon and gave the leaders the coins for the other members.

"If it burns very hot, it means someone's in danger and you only need

to look at the galleon to know who's calling for help." added Cho.

"You're really brilliant! Thanks!" exclaimed Ron, forgetting his irritation at Cho as he stared at the golden coin with in his hand with DA etched on its surface.

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"We're ready." declared Harry during lunch. "Today is Sunday... Tomorrow we must go and bring our comrades-in-wands back. If you have any doubts about this mission, say it now. Otherwise, it will be too late." he paused to see if any of them wore a tiny hint of reservation on their faces but what greeted his eyes were supreme determination and unrivaled courage. The group was almost glowing with it. "All right. We will meet here and leave at exactly 6 am tomorrow. Rest well for now. We will need our strength."

Chapter 11 - The Second Mission

"Umm...Harry, can we talk?" said Ron tentatively.

"Sure." said Harry as he led Ron to a nearby sofa.

"Umm...about Ginny...I mean..."

Harry nodded in understanding. "You're asking if we are going to rescue her too?" he glanced at Ron who looked tormented with the thought of his only sister suffering at the hands of the enemies. "What do you think? Silly, of course we are. We just need to strengthen ourselves first."

Ron sighed with relief. "Thanks, mate. I just need to hear that. You know, before tomorrow."

"Don't worry. I'm sure Dumbledore ----" Harry suddenly stopped. Ron eyed him questioningly. "Nothing...I just remembered that Dumbledore was the one who adviced me to go here."

"But how? He was captured weeks ago." said Ron.

"I think he used mental telepathy to talk to me. Wait, I'll try if I can make it work reverse. I also want to ask him a few questions myself." said Harry, concentrating hard on the headmaster's face until it became solid in his mind.

"Professor, can you hear me?"

"Harry?"

"Yes, professor, are you and Ginny alright?"

"Yes, don't worry about us. Focus on your plan for tomorrow."

"Ok. Professor, I want to ask you something else if you don't mind. Do you have any idea how I can be talking to you right now? And why did my scar stop hurting. The pain is supposed to be intense now but I don't have any visions anymore."

"No, I don't mind. The shock you gave me when you almost demolished my office last June made me realize that. As for the first question, I think some of your inert powers surfaced at last due to the urgency of the situation. As for the second question, I can only presume that Voldemort has been closing his mind to you too to prevent you from discovering his plans. He does not want to take chances now that he's winning the war."

"Oh!" was all Harry could say to that.

"Be careful tomorrow, Harry."

"We will. Thanks, Professor. Take care too." With that, Harry cleared his mind again and started to tell Ron what the headmaster had told him about Ginny. He was exhausted from the effort but seeing the relieved expression of his best friend was worth every ounce of energy he spent.

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Monday, 5:45 a.m. at the Training Room

All the members of Dumbledore's Army, wearing special DA cloaks magically sewn by their house-elf friends, were nervously pacing the floor while waiting for the signal to leave. The team leaders were currently reiterating the plan and outlining all possible scenarios to their respective groups. Professor McGonagall carefully stayed away from their path to avoid increasing their stress. As the clock struck 6:00 a.m., all members disillusioned themselves and silently followed their leaders to the path that led to Hogsmeade. They were glad to find the place deserted except for the house-elves nervously waiting for their arrival.

"Remember, the whole operation should take no longer than 15 minutes. If anything happens, just press the coin and the rest will try to help if they can. Also, as soon as the group has completed its mission, return to the training room immediately and wait for the others. We'll have a short meeting afterwards. Okay?" said Harry.

"House-elves

included."

The others mouthed a silent "yes" followed by swishing of cloaks and small 'pops' as the DA members apparated to their destinations.

Several minutes later, Ron's and Lee's groups arrived safely at the Training Room. No one said anything as they waited for the others to return. Some resorted to reading while others played solo wizard chess to while away the time. Each constantly checking the time and wondering what's taking the others so long. It had been almost an hour. Some unconsciously held the coin as if expecting it to burn soon. The wait was almost unbearable when they heard arguments erupting outside the room and it seemed to be getting nearer.

"HOW DARE THE TWO OF YOU! DIDN'T WE SPECIFY THAT WE'LL COME FOR YOU AT EXACTLY 6:05AM? DIDN'T WE CLEARLY STATE IN OUR LETTER THAT YOU SHOULD BE READY WHEN WE ARRIVE TO PICK YOU UP! WE ALMOST GOT KILLED BECAUSE OF YOUR IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR!"

The door suddenly opened and in came a livid Hermione followed by Dean and highly embarrassed twins. Parvati was assisting Seamus who was limping with pain but assured everyone that he just tripped on the way back and was not cursed by the death-eaters. Ron let out his breath which he never realized he was holding when he noticed Hermione enter the room.

"But the gnome ate the letter, honestly!" said George.

"Yeah, we were just starting to read it when the gnome grab it from our dainty hands and shoved it down its throat." added Fred.

Hermione was about to curse them to oblivion when Ron, upon realizing what's happening, hastily step in.

"Really! You know, you don't need to make pathetic alibis. A simple apology will do." Ron glared at them.

The twins looked nervously at one another. It never occurred to them that little ickle Ronniekins would dare tell them off for anything. But he

was right. Mustering enough courage, they both looked at Hermione and mumbled something that sounded like "we're sorry." Hermione just rolled her eyes at them and walked to the other part of the room. Then, as if suddenly noticing something, she returned to where Ron was.

"Where's Harry's group?" she asked Ron.

"They're not here yet!"

"WHAT!" shouted Hermione in panic. She quickly checked her watch. "It's more than an hour!"

As if on cue, the door opened again and all eyes turned to the new arrivals.

"Guys, is Luna here?" Harry suddenly asked, scanning the people in the room.

"Why? What happened?" asked Cho who walked over to join the conversation.

"We don't know actually. When we apparated to Hogsmeade, she was still behind us but when we arrived there, we discovered that she's not with us anymore. We checked the place and even went back to the safe house but we can't find her." said Katie. Harry looked distraught.

"Master Harry Potter, Dobby is looking for your friend, Luna. Don't worry." said Dobby quickly and disappeared. The other house-elves followed too.

All stared into space without any idea of what to do next. The others did not really like Luna. Some even thought her mad but the situation called for some unity and any fighter for the good side should be treated with respect and concern. Their anxiety was tripled as they felt the coin burning. Each took out the coin and saw the words -----
"Help! Luna! The Quibbler!" blinking fast.

Without wasting anymore time, Harry called Dobby and requested

him to find out where the Quibbler was. Within seconds, Dobby arrived with the exact location and Harry apparated to the Quibbler's office where a shocking sight greeted him. Luna was fearlessly fighting her attackers - 4 death-eaters. Dodging curses and sending out several trying to buy some time until help arrives.

Harry quickly pulled his own wand and tried to get close to Luna to shield her from some of the more advanced curses, thankful that the attackers did not seem to be very adept at curses yet.

"ESTUPENDO!" he shouted at them and the enemies backed away quickly, staring at their wands as if wondering why they were holding such a stupid piece of wood. Harry smiled as he started to run to Luna's side. His smile faded, however, when he heard loud pops again as more death-eaters entered the office. The battle continued.

"CRUCIO!" one of the death-eaters immediately cursed Harry but he was able to duck in time.

Harry realized that he needed to get Luna soon so they could escape but the death-eaters made them too busy. The four death-eaters were still behaving oddly but the new arrivals were more experienced than the first four. They never gave them time to breathe. Curses flew across the room at lightning speed. Harry saw Luna struck by a stunning spell. He quickly revived her and was exhausted himself when he heard several more pops. The death-eaters stopped to look at the new arrivals too, not expecting any reinforcements. But they were surprised when several curses hit each of them as ten DA members who already started training arrived.

"YOU IDIOT! Why did you disapparate suddenly?" shouted Hermione in between curses. "I thought we're not supposed to go anywhere alone, especially in situations like this. Whatever happened to the 'strength in numbers' speech you gave last time?" she continued furiously.

"Sorry. I guess I didn't think. I was toonever mind. Sorry again." mumbled Harry as he helped Luna up.

"Hey, Harry! Let's try that 'collective-defend-and-attack' strategy we

practiced before." shouted Ron, clearly enjoying himself.

"Yeah, cool!" shouted the others. Harry smiled in spite of himself. His friends did not seem terrified anymore. In fact, they seemed to have the upper hand in this little encounter. He gave Ron a free rein to lead the commands.

"FORMATION!" shouted Ron. The DA members quickly surrounded the bewildered death-eaters, stuck out their wands and simultaneously yelled, "ABSOLUTO PROTEGO!" A rainbow shield covered the DA members. Then without removing their wands, Ron shouted, "HYDRO-OXIDUS!" at the stunned death-eaters with the effect of the spell multiplied six times due to the combination of their powers.

It hit the death-eaters forcefully and smashed them to the wall, sending some of the office equipments to fall on the ground. Sensing defeat, they quickly disappeared to heal themselves somewhere and glared maliciously at the DA members as they did so. Harry then quickly put up some defensive spells around the office to avoid another encounter.

Hermione, still clearly annoyed at the turn of events, glared at Luna and asked heatedly. "Can you please enlighten us why we are all here now instead of the Training Room?"

"I apologize. I just could not resist the urge to visit my dad's office before I go back. There's something that I need to check because I don't believe that my father is dead." Luna said evenly while Harry held her hand in support. Cho's eyes narrowed when she noticed it.

Hermione's face visibly softened. "Did you find out anything?"

Luna got up and retrieved two pots of plants from under one of the table, probably his father's. One was dead, the other was still blooming. They all stared at the plants unable to comprehend what it meant but Hermione appeared to be deep in thought.

"These are not ordinary plants. My mother enchanted them to live magically. One represented her, the other represented my father and

third me. My father brings my plant wherever he goes because it gives him an idea of my current condition. The one representing my mother is dead but the one representing my father is still alive. So, it means....it means he's still alive and just hiding or probably captured somewhere.....but still alive!" Luna said tearfully and the others, sympathizing with her finally understood why she had to do it.

"Luna, I may not know how to find your father now but I think we can do something to make his spirit come alive." said Hermione brightly, trying to make up for her rudeness a while ago.

"What do you mean?" said Luna cautiously.

"All publications have stopped operating or forced to close because of the current situation. Who shall give news to the people then? Who shall inform them on what to do or where they can go for help if anything happens? The ministry is almost useless nowadays so I believe the most we can do is...." Hermione hesitantly glanced at the others before she declared, "I think we must reestablish....The Quibbler."

A hushed silence followed her pronouncement.

Chapter 12 - Confrontation at the Quibbler

"I beg your pardon?" Parvati said, eyebrows slightly raised and with arms folded across her chest.

"You must be kidding!" sneered another incredulous voice which turned out to be Cho. "No one reads that rubbish, you know."

Harry glared at the two girls while still holding Luna protectively. "Quibbler's reputation may not be that good but it was the ONLY newspaper that bravely published the truth about Voldemort's return when the others were too busy slandering me." he said venomously.

"I am not forcing it on you and besides I haven't even agreed to that yet." said Luna, glad for Harry's support and unconsciously leaned slightly on his chest. She felt Harry put her arms around her lightly as if it was the most natural thing to do but she didn't mind. She felt warm and secure and slightly light-headed.

"Well, I still think the idea stinks!" shouted Cho much to Luna's embarrassment and to the astonishment of all.

"Cho!" gasped Hermione. This was not exactly the reaction she expected when she stated her idea. "You don't have to be so rude. We're on the same side here in case you haven't noticed."

"I don't want our reputation to be tainted by that piece of trash! It's bad enough being on this situation without adding insult to our injuries." Cho declared stubbornly.

"So, is that what you care about? Your stupid reputation? What about the TRUTH? Or would you prefer that the world be ignorant in this chaos?" cried Luna angrily, shaking her head in disbelief that someone from her own house, supposedly the house of the most clever ones, would utter such nonsense. She turned to Harry and let her tears flow on his shoulder. Harry, oblivious to all, embraced her tightly while murmuring words of comforts to her.

The other DA members just stared at the scene in front of them, not really sure on whose side to take. But they were quite upset and

confused about the situation. They thought that after what they just went through, everyone would behave more compassionately towards one another. They SHOULD behave that way. And when did Harry and Luna became a couple?

"Do you think your father would mind if we use his paper to publish the atrocities of Voldemort and what the whole community can do about it?" Hermione suddenly asked Luna, making a mental note to ask Harry about the PDA later.

"Well, if you put it that way....I think he will be very proud to be a part of it. But who would write the articles?" said Luna, focusing back on Hermione's idea now much to the irritation of ridiculous house mate who seemed on edge for some reason that she could not fathom.

"We, of course. Colin and Creevey can take care of the pictures and the rest of us could take our turns writing the articles. We don't have school right now so we have so much time in our hands." The Creevey brothers looked excited at this but a few groaned at the thought of doing paper work.

"It's for a good cause, guys." prodded Harry. "Besides, Hermione will be the one to write all the major articles and the editorial. Don't worry." he added with a sly grin at Hermione.

"So, is it all agreed then?" prompted Hermione.

"Are you really going to write all the major stuff?" asked Lee.

Hermione glared at Harry who simply shrugged his shoulders and shot her an 'I'm-Innocent-Don't-Look-at-Me-Like-That' look. "Fine." she said finally.

Everything went smoothly after that. Several suggestions flew into the air regarding what to write about, when to publish and where they were going to get the funds. They would have stayed longer if Harry had not remembered something.

"Hold on, guys, I think we better get back now. We have a meeting with Professor Moody ----Where's Cho?" He looked around and saw

the pretty Asian girl sobbing furiously on a swiveling chair behind a desk overflowing with books and documents. He let go of Luna and walked towards her. 'Crying again!' he thought, wondering what made her cry now. She was a walking teardrop last year when Cedric died and the memory of her walking out of their date in tears didn't exactly endear her to him.

"What's the problem, Cho?" he asked gently.

"Oh, Harry!" cried Cho. She threw her arms around him and tried to kiss him but Harry resisted and carefully pried her arms away from him. Not a very smart move because then, Cho suddenly slapped him and screamed angrily, "So, I'm not good enough for the wizard savior now, am I? And who do you like now? That pathetic Luna? You could do better than that, you two-timing liar! Why not Granger or Ginny? At least they're both pretty and intelligent. It's so humiliating to be dumped for someone like HER!" she pointed her finger at a stunned Luna.

"Don't call her pathetic! At least Luna doesn't get all teary-eyed in every stressful situation. Besides, Luna and I are just friends and there's nothing between you and me anymore so whoever I date does not concern you now. And don't ever call me a two-timing liar, you were the one who dated someone else first." said Harry angrily, berating himself for being idiotic enough to fall for this narrow-minded girl.

The other DA members, except Luna whose eyes were transfixed on the wall, looked at each other awkwardly and tried to busy themselves with trying to figure out how to operate the machines there. The office was quite impressive now that they had taken the time to observe it and its contents. Magically operated printing machines were strategically placed to make the place seem spacious. The folders in the file cabinets were all in order and judging from the posters and smiling pictures on the wall and tables, they assumed that the working relationship of the employer and the employees was quite harmonious.

They were enjoying themselves. But no amount of distraction, however, could make them fail to notice how Cho tried to curse Luna

and how Harry sent the spell back to its originator. Unable to say anything, they watched as Cho, hiding her now pus covered face, exclaimed in horror and fury as she hastily tried to remember the spell's counter-curse. Luna seemed unaware of it but Harry was full of disappointment and frustration.

"WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS? AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE AT THE HEADQUARTERS BY NOW" growled a very familiar voice after a soft 'pop'. They all turned to the person with their wands out. They heaved a sigh of relief when they recognized who it was --- Professor Moody. His normal eye was eyeing Cho with great curiosity while the other was scanning the room for some hidden enemies. His 360-degree eye stopped at the sight of four cloaked figures jumping up and down in a far corner of the office. "And who are those idiots?" he asked pointing in the direction oh the cloaked figures.

Harry gasped as he followed Moody's gaze. "Stupid death-eaters! I didn't realize they are still here." he stated apologetically.

"Obviously." Moody spat as he approached the figures.

The death-eaters let out terrified yelps when they saw the professor. Who wouldn't? With his rotating eye, wooden leg and heavily scarred face, Moody looked like an improperly reincarnated corpse. That, aside from his usual paranoia and unorthodox way of handling a situation, was frightening enough.

"Who are you?" demanded Moody at the four cowering figures who only looked dumbly at one another.

"W-what?" one asked fearfully.

"I SAID WHO ARE YOU?" repeated Moody, pointing his wand at them but still they couldn't seem to understand his question.

"E-er, Professor, I hit them with the stupidity curse a while ago." Harry offered the information. Moody's lips twitched slightly at that and muttered some spell to remove the cloaks from their heads.

"That's Crabbe and Goyle!" exclaimed Ron. "Harry, your curse was a

waste of time. They're already stupid!"

"Pansy!" Hermione couldn't believe Voldemort was recruiting children to be his servants.

"The other one is called Nott! His father is also a death-eater." said Harry.

"Hmm....come on, let's bring them to the new headquarter. We might find out some useful information from them." said Moody gruffly as he tied the death-eaters and made his way to the fireplace. He dumped them unceremoniously in it before stepping in himself. Others followed suit until only Harry and Luna remained.

Harry, still remembering the uncomfortable feeling of using the floo network. decided to apparate instead. Luna was already stepping into the fire when he quickly grabbed her hand and spun away to the Training Room where the others were waiting for them.

"Where's Moody and the others?" asked Harry when they arrived.

"They are with Professor McGonagall right now but he told us to stay here and wait until he comes back." answered Hermione.

Now that the immediate danger had passed, they all talked about the day's events animatedly while waiting for Moody's arrival. Some flourished it up a bit to make it sound more exciting. One even went as far as claiming that he had almost beaten Lucius Malfoy to the ground in a duel, in which his group mates laughingly protested that he couldn't know it for sure because the enemies wore masks and disappeared quickly when they sensed their disadvantage.

Everyone was in a jolly mood after that except for one extremely pretty girl who discreetly stayed away from the others while her eyes were gleaming with hatred as she looked on the happy faces of a handsome black-haired boy and a blond-haired girl wearing a dreamy expression on her face. However, her expression turned blank as soon as Professor McGonagall and Professor Moody entered the room.

"I'm glad that all of you returned safely and without a trace of any major injury however, I am not at all happy about what happened afterwards." said Professor McGonagall. "Professor Moody has informed me that you had an UNPLANNED visit to the Quibbler's office and fought several death-eaters there. Had your enemies been adult dark wizards, you would have been severely injured or worse, killed by now?" she continued, eyeing each of them carefully. "Care to tell us what really happened?"

Each of the DA members present at the Quibbler tried to explain at once but after seeing the irritated expressions of the teachers, they willingly let Hermione do all the talking with the other team leaders adding some details from time to time. As if planned, no one bothered to mention the disagreement about the Quibbler and the issue with Cho.

"Very well, then. I understand but this must never happen again." said the stern professor.

"So, that's settled. Are you all going to undergo auror training?" Professor Moody scrutinized each of them, sizing them up. He stopped at Hermione who looked as if she was on the verge of saying something and decided against it.

Harry, however, did not hesitate. He stared hard at Cho before he spoke clearly, "Professor, i hate to say this but all of us are going to train ... except for Cho." he declared.

"May I ask why?" asked Moody, recalling the scene he witnessed when he arrived at the Quibbler.

"She has an attitude problem that I believe may be dangerous to our operations." answered Harry with a certainty that shocked the others.

Cho, unusually silent since the professors came, quickly exploded with rage. "HOW DARE YOU! IT'S YOU WHO HAS AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM, NOT ME!" she eyed the others warily. "YOU ALL AGREE WITH HIM? TO HELL WITH YOU ALL! I QUIT!" With that, Cho hastily removed her DA cloak, threw it on the floor and left the room after throwing one last contemptuous glare at Harry and Luna.

Chapter 13 - Another Mission for Dumbledore's Army

"Smooth....very smooth..." commented Hermione sarcastically.

"I just did what I had to do." said Harry simply and quickly left the room, not wanting to talk to anybody at that particular moment. Contrary to what the others must have thought, he was not that insensitive. After Cho's attempt to kiss him at the Quibbler's office, he had a sneaking suspicion on what might have possibly triggered her peculiar behaviour. Cho wanted him back. Unfortunately, Harry did not share that feeling anymore. He now realized that dating her had been a mistake. He only liked her, not loved. He liked her because she was very pretty and really talented in his favorite sport but he now knew that all of it just amounted to a mere adolescent crush and nothing more.

He thought that Cho realized that mistake too after she started dating Michael Corner but he was wrong. It seemed that she had decided that he was still a better catch and would stop at nothing to get him back. That scared him out of his wits. Seeing her eyes glow with anger like that and her attempt at cursing someone who didn't even do anything to her made him think that he cannot be trusted. She had a dangerous streak and might even betray them all if given a chance...just out of spite....and he cannot allow that...For his and her sanity and the safety of their friends, she should not be allowed to learn advanced curses...yet, maybe later after she developed some sense of collective responsibility. But now, she had to find peace in herself first. 'Sometimes, it's really kinder to be cruel.' thought Harry before he fell into a deep and uneventful sleep.

Before the sun was up, Harry found himself being dragged to the breakfast table by an overeager Ron. He didn't really want to wake up that early. He figured that a nice long slumber could clear his mind of any worries but Ron seemed too excited to be ignored. Gradually, he ate his breakfast, slightly wondering why they had to rise that early. Even the professors were still napping with the exception of Professor McGonagall who seemed to be 'on-duty.'

"Why?" he asked Ron who was currently trying to gobble down his plateful of food with a single swallow. "Hey, what's the hurry?"

"Dunno" was the reply he got.

"What?!? Are you crazy? You woke me up for nothing!" said Harry in a hushed voice, not wanting to disturb the others.

"Well -- actually Hermione told me that Moody wants all the team leaders in the training room now. So hurry, it must be something important." said Ron.

With that, the two quickly finished their meal and hurried to the training room where they found Professor Moody, Hermione, Lee and Tonks seriously pacing the room and four cloaked figures bound in one corner. Harry noticed that the four were shooting dangerous glances at their captors. They were already back to normal.

"So, what have you found out?" asked Harry, assuming that they were all there to discuss the information they got from the young death-eaters.

Tonks grimly beckoned them all to sit on the small round table while Professor Moody conjured a transparent sheet that enclosed the captives, barring them from hearing anything they were going to talk about. Hermione was looking perplexed and even Lee seemed not his real self. Harry immediately braced himself for the bad news while Ron sat beside Hermione.

As soon as they were all comfortably seated, Professor Moody sighed heavily and started the impromptu meeting. "I trust you know what the veritaserum is. Through that powerful potion, we found some very interesting informations from the captives. According to them, Voldemort had discovered that Snape is a spy and sent his most powerful servants to kill him. They also told us that Dumbledore is still alive although very weak and that Voldemort himself is the one administering the torture. However, what concerned us most is Ginny's condition." Harry felt Ron tense at his last sentence.

"Dumbledore and Snape can handle the torture. After all, this is not their first encounter with the atrocities of war but it may be traumatic for the youngest Weasley....." He paused for what seemed like an

eternity before he continued, "She is now the personal slave of Lucius' son and they are now at the Grimmauld Place." he finished matter-of-factly, staring directly into Ron's horrified expression.

"What exactly does a personal slave do, Professor?" asked Hermione, articulating Ron's thoughts exactly.

"You wouldn't wish to know, Miss Granger and I, for one, am not really sure of what's happening with Miss Weasley. The captives did not really know much about how Draco treat her...but I'm afraid it might entail...physical contact." said Tonks, hesitating at the last words which alarmed his listeners even more. Hermione nearly fainted at his reply and Ron went white as a ghost. Harry, on the other hand, seemed beyond shock at this point. He stared hard at the professor before asking curtly, "Then why are we still here?"

"Ah, I wondered when you'd come around to asking that. Took you long enough." replied Moody, twitching his lips on what might have been a smile if his face was not crooked enough to make it unrecognizable. "Here's the plan...."

The four were silent as Moody finished telling them the plan to get Ginny out of the Grimmauld Place. It was quite ingenious. Simple but very effective if executed properly. Even Hermione did not complain for once. They would just go to the place disguised as the four captives with the aid of the polyjuice potion that the Potions Master had prepared for the Order several months ago, Immobilize Draco with a few spells of their choice and bring Ginny back. Thinking that the meeting was adjourned, they all started to leave the room but Tonks stopped them with a silent shake of her head.

"Now, to our next agenda...Cho." They all turned to Harry at once who made a big deal of polishing his wand, pretending not to notice their stares.

"What about her?" he grudgingly asked when no one spoke for a while.

"I trust you to smooth things out with her as soon as possible. Heavens, we have enough problems on our hands without having to

deal with adolescent squabbles." growled Moody, seemingly back to his old menacing self. "But between the two of us, I think Luna is a better choice." he whispered to a suddenly blushing Harry.

"Fine...fine..." said Harry sullenly to end the embarrassing situation.

"All right. Let's meet here again tonight after dinner and let's curse some fools." concluded Tonks, stifling a giggle at the sight of the young man's expression of disgust.

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"So, Harry, are you and Luna reallyyou-know-what?" asked Hermione cautiously, ignoring her friends' discomfort. They were seated at their now favorite sofa near Professor McGonagall's table but discreetly hidden from other's view. Ron was still pondering about his sister's predicament but turned one ear to their direction, also curious about his bestfriend's reply.

"Nothing. We are not a couple if that's what you mean. We are not even dating for God's sake...We just wrote a few letter to each other before we arrived here, that's all." replied Harry honestly. He thought it best to just answer their questions and be done with it. After all, they were his bestfriends and would never blab it to anybody who would care to listen.

"You what!" exclaimed Hermione which caused Ron to raise one eyebrow.

"It's just simple friendly letters...not love letters...okay?" he replied exasperatedly. Luna and I were just friends..Why couldn't they just accept it?

"Okay, fine. Whatever you say.." said Hermione but still looked unconvinced. "You better talk to Cho now." Harry nodded gratefully and went to find Cho.

He walked around the room to find her but she was nowhere to be found. He tried looking at the Training Room but all he saw there

were the four captives guarded by Tonks. He asked the other DA members if they had seen Cho anywhere but unfortunately, they did not. He finally approached Professor McGonagall but was met by a similar response followed by a stern lecture about his tactlessness. His apprehension increased when one of the female DA members commented that Cho did not sleep on their bed last night. He hurried to Professor Moody who was now eating his breakfast peacefully.

"Professor, I can't find Cho anywhere!" he told him worriedly.

The professor's eyes narrowed in concern. "I was afraid of this. Where's your map?" Harry silently cursed himself for not having thought of that. He summoned the map from one of his cloaks and they both stared at it for a few minutes.

"She's left Hogwarts!"

"That's quite obvious, son. I should have watched her more closely last night after what happened but I was too preoccupied." said Professor Moody with unmistakable remorse.

"No, it's all my fault. If I had not lashed out on her like that, she wouldn't have left." he slumped on the chair, suddenly feeling drained of energy.

"You did what you have to do but I must admit you could have handled it a lot better. Don't blame yourself too much. You're still young. You're not that adept at dealing with feelings yet."

"What do we do now? She could be captured orsomething...." he stopped. He didn't really want to think about what that 'something' might be.

"Why do you care? You certainly made it clear last night that you didn't want her around." asked Moody, trying to discern his feelings on the matter.

"She's still my friend!" cried Harry. "I may be annoyed at her right now but I don't want anything bad to happen to her."

"We can not do anything right now short of launching a very dangerous man hunt. And you know very well that we don't have any available Order members to cover that. I advise you to rest for now and concentrate on our mission tonight." said the professor, closing his eyes to stop the pressure from clouding his mind.

"No, I can't do that. Dobby!" called Harry to his friend who suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Yes, Mr. Harry Potter, sir. What can Dobby do for him?" asked Dobby eagerly, excited to be called upon for help by the one who helped him to be free.

"You know Cho Chang, right?" the elf nodded. "I want you to find her now. She left Hogwarts and it may be dangerous for her if enemies find her."

"Don't worry, Mr. Harry Potter. Me and my friends are going to help you find her." said the house elf before disappearing somewhere.

"You'd really make a fine auror someday, Potter. Good luck tonight!"

"Thank you, professor." With that Harry left to find someone who could make him forget the increasing weight of responsibility on his shoulders...someone he could talk to without feeling any pressure...someone he could laugh with and relax for a while before embarking another dangerous mission that night...someone like.....Luna.

Chapter 14 - Mission Failed

.....Luna.....

Harry found the silvery blond haired girl sitting on the sofa that he and his bestfriends had occupied a while ago. He saw her serenely sitting there with eyes half-closed as if lost in deep thought and unconsciously stroking the leaves of the plant they retrieved from the Quibbler's office. Just watching her made him smile. He slowly approached her, all the while wondering how it would feel if her soft hand was stroking his hand instead. They held hands before, usually in times of distress, but he could remember being pacified by her touch. It was amazing.

As if sensing his presence, Luna suddenly turned her gaze on him and gave him a slight smile. It immediately warmed his heart and he noticed that her usual blank stares and ethereal appearance were replaced with warmth and fragility. She timidly invited him to sit beside her, unsure of his reaction, but was pleased when he also gave him a smile and proceeded to do so. Not knowing what to say, he contented himself with watching the young woman caressing the magical plant.

"Harry, you didn't have to do that for me..." said Luna, finally breaking the silence.

"What?" asked Harry in confusion.

"You didn't have to defend me. I'm quite used to insults, you know. Not just from her but from everybody else. That thing with Cho....she was your girlfriend....and I feel terrible for making things bad between the two of you." said Luna as she lowered her gaze to the ground, neglecting the plant she was holding on her lap.

"No, I didn't have to but I want to. Cho was my girlfriend, not anymore. You're one of the most wonderful person I had been fortunate enough to meet and I could not stand hearing someone belittling you. You're very special and no one does that to any of the people I care about, not even her." said Harry, lifting her chin up to meet his gaze.

"Why are you being so nice to me?" she reluctantly asked but other rather awkward questions nagging her mind were left unsaid.

"I don't know...maybe because you were the only one I could talk to about Sirius' death without feeling guilt and pressure...maybe because you were the only one brave enough to communicate with me when I was almost suicidal in my aunt's house....I am not sure....maybe it's simply because I now realized that there were so much more to you than meets the eye. You're kind, smart, brave and you make me happy." Luna blushed at his words and averted her gaze again.

"I didn't know you were very expressive, Harry." she said in a hushed whisper as if she was finding it hard to say the words.

"Maybe you just bring out the best in me..." said Harry simply, taking hold of her free hand and lifted it to his lips.

Luna stared at him in amazement and almost drowned in the whirlwind of emotion flickering on his handsome face. She started to get up and leave the place but she found her knees too weak to go anywhere. She stared helplessly at the young man caressing her hand. She tried to get away from the nerve-wracking sensations but her knees wobbled from the sudden movement causing her to fall on his lap. Harry immediately wrapped his arms around her and pulled her closer while whispering to her ear, "Don't be afraid. I like you....I really do...and I haven't felt this way to anyone before...not even Cho...so please...don't escape from me."

At his words, Luna reluctantly wrapped her arms around him and nervously kissed him on the cheek..."I like you too, Harry."

Harry slowly bent his head, embracing her tightly to ----

"There you are! Oooopss, so soooooorry!" said Ron, quickly hiding himself behind the shelf. Harry could swear he heard some muffled laughter from behind making him wonder how long have they been watching them.

"What do you want?" snapped Harry annoyed at the interruption but did not release his hold on Luna.

"Nothing! Just friends, huh?" Several DA members removed the disillusionment charm on themselves and teased the two relentlessly, led by Ron and the twins of course, before running to the dinner table.

"By the way, sorry for the ummm....interruption. Moody just asked us to tell you that we need to eat dinner now." shouted Ron from afar.

"AAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!RONALD WEASLEY! I SWEAR I'M GOING TO KILL YOU SOMEDAY!" groaned Harry. There was no doubt now that they heard and saw everything. He looked at the red-faced Luna, her head slightly buried on his chest in embarrassment and he realized that he did not care. So what if they saw them like this?

"Hush, it's okay. At least now they know. They actually saved us the trouble of informing them, don't you think?" stated Harry, releasing his grip on her.

They walked hand in hand to the dining table, ignoring the snickers and some blatant teasings from their friends. But aside from that, dinner was uneventful. If anything,.. it only served to remind the four team leaders about their mission that night. The others had no idea about it but they sensed the apprehension on their leaders' faces. Their suspicion grew more when Professor Moody signaled the four to go to the training room with him.

Harry muttered a distracted 'wait for me' to Luna and stood up to follow Moody. But before he could go, Luna steered him to a more private place and kissed lightly on his left cheek.

"What's that for?"

"That's to say thank you for making me feel special." Then she kissed him again on his right cheek. "This is for good luck on whatever you're going to do tonight. Don't deny it." She then slowly put her arms around his neck and pulled him closer, pressing her lips to his. "This is to make sure that you'd come back safely."

Harry smiled at this and drew her close again. This time their lips met with unrestrained passion with his left hand gently caressing her back, making them both weak with longing. He pulled away reluctantly as he remembered the mission.

"What was that for?" asked Luna breathlessly.

"That's to make sure that you'd wait for me." replied Harry with a grin.

"Silly. Of course, I'd wait for you."

After forcing the disgusting potion into their mouths, the four team leaders proceeded to apparate outside Grimmauld Place and enter in the usual way. It might appear highly suspicious if Harry just apparate all of them inside. The captives were not that powerful yet.

"Hey, what are you doing here?" shouted Draco in welcome when they saw his visitors. He motioned all of them to sit down. "Does father want anything?"

The four just shook their heads dumbly.

"Well, it doesn't matter. At least I have some decent company now. I'm so bored here." drawled Draco. Ron, in the face of Crabbe, clenched his fist to suppress his growing rage.

"What about your slave? Isn't she entertaining enough?" asked Hermione who took the appearance of Pansy. She was surprised when she noticed a concerned look pass his face so fast that she almost thought she imagined it.

"I got tired of her and besides, I can't spend all my energy ravishing her. It's just a waste of time. So what brings you here?" replied Draco lazily but the previous welcoming tone was gone. It was as if he did not want them there anymore.

"Nothing. Bored to tears too. Hexing people are not so fun anymore. Can we have a go at your slave? I'm sure we'd find her enjoyable." said Goyle, Harry in polyjuice, attempting to discern how cruel Draco

was to Ginny. He was taken aback when Draco hastily stood up and pointed his wand at him.

"Don't you dare, Goyle. No one touches my property. She's mine!" Draco also pointed his wand at the other two boys. "That goes for you, too."

"Err...umm...no need to get upset, Draco. We're just asking, you know." said Lee who took Nott's appearance but he, too, was wondering about Draco's reaction.

"So, where's she? Your father asked us to check on her. You wouldn't want us to tell him something he doesn't want to hear, do you?" asked Hermione shrewdly. She knew they only have one hour before the effect of the polyjuice potion wears off and they couldn't waste anymore time talking to him.

"In the left bedroom upstairs. Don't bother her. She's sleeping now." replied Draco with a hint of panic in his voice. Hermione raised one eyebrow but decided not to comment on it. Harry chose that moment to summon some butterbeers and gave one to each one of them, careful to put a few drops of sleeping potion before he handed one to Draco.

"Doesn't matter. Come on! Let's drink to victory!" announced Harry and they all took large swigs on the beverage.

Within seconds, Draco collapsed on the sofa, unconscious. The three boys acted as look-outs while Hermione hastily went upstairs to retrieve what they thought was a thoroughly destroyed Ginny. They decided to let her go alone for they did not want to find Ginny in a very compromising situation. Several minutes had passed but still no Hermione and Ginny. They carefully checked the watch and was shocked to see that they did not have much time left.

"Hermione! Come back now! We're running out of time!" shouted Ron. He was answered by an ear-splitting scream, unmistakably Hermione's.

Harry and Ron hastily ran upstairs to help her, leaving Lee to stand

guard, but was utterly shaken by the sight that greeted them. They found Ginny with her wand pointed at Hermione who was twisting on the ground in extreme pain. They wondered how come Ginny had a wand with her but they were more disturbed about the fact that she hit Hermione with an unforgivable curse.

"Ginny! STOP! That's Hermione. We came to rescue you." shouted Ron, thinking that his sister thought they were enemies.

"I know." answered Ginny calmly without turning to face them.

"You knew? B-but why?" Ron was clearly flabbergasted at her response.

Harry was now wondering if she was under the Imperius curse. Ginny slowly turned around to point her wand at them. Harry looked directly into her eyes, watching for tell-tale signs of magical control. There was none. He only saw absolute hatred on her once radiant eyes. She was acting on her own free will.

"You let me down...CRUCIO!" she cursed Ron and he immediately fell on his knees, completely unprepared for the attack.

"No, Ginny, you're wrong. Sorry if we didn't come earlier. But now we're here. Please come back with us." pleaded Harry, unwilling to curse the person he always treated as his younger sister.

Ginny hesitated for a moment, thinking of what he said, but decided to ignore his plea. Her dark expression returned. "I won't. I belong here.....CRUCIO!" she bellowed at him, instantly lifting the curse on Ron who was still too weak to move.

"PROTEGO!" shouted Harry. In spite of everything, he still did not want to harm her in any way.

Sensing that she could not defeat Harry on a duel, Ginny quickly ran downstairs but seeing Draco's unconscious state fuelled her rage. "You hurt him!" she exclaimed as she ran back to where Harry was.

"LEGILIMENS!" screamed Harry in frustration. He desperately

wanted to know what happened to make her act this way. Behind him, Ron and Hermione were slowly regaining their strength and watched in amazement as Ginny clutched her head in an attempt to block Harry's effort to break into her mind. But Harry was stronger. Soon images of Draco and Ginny flashed into his mind. Ginny being taken away from Hogwarts...Ginny terrified at being left alone in a dark and smelly dungeon ...Draco choosing her to be his personal slave...Draco and Ginny locked in a tight embrace....Ginny lying on his lap....Ginny eagerly preparing dinner for the two of them...

Harry broke the contact in shock and stared at Ginny in disbelief. None of those images portrayed Draco forcing her to do anything. She was very much willing...As he watched the young girl weakly struggle on her feet, he quickly beckoned Ron and Hermione to follow him downstairs. Without a word, he grabbed their hands and motioned Lee to hold him too. Before they could even ask him anything, the four were immediately lifted from the ground and were spun around in a spiral motion. When their feet touched the ground, they were already at the training room.

They saw eager faces waiting for them...especially the twins who really took an effort to create welcome banners for Ginny. Even the professors were in high spirits. It was Neville who noticed them first. "Hey, what happened?"

Everyone turned to the four at once. Ron and Hermione were still weakly clutching their sides, pain clearly etched on their faces. Lee seemed perplexed but Harry wore a blank expression that they could not fathom.

"What happened?" asked Professor McGonagall looking worried.

"We had a little problem with Ginny, professor." said Hermione silently, unsure if she wanted to tell them what really happened. She could not believe it herself. She watched silently as Luna unconcernedly walked towards Harry and massaged his forehead. The simple action gradually eased his tension and she saw Harry visibly relax. "Ask him." said Hermione to Professor McGonagall, pointing one shaky at Harry.

"Harry, where's Ginny?" ventured one worried Fred who couldn't take the silence anymore.

Harry closed his eyes, taking his time before he carefully answered, "She did not want to come."

"B-but why?" asked George, nearly falling on his chair as he did so.

Harry wished he did not know the answer to that because the truth was painful and unacceptable in the current circumstances but he was left with no choice. He sighed deeply as he replied, "She's in love with him." Seeing their disbelieving faces, he continued. "She used the cruciatus curse on Ron and Hermione..." Several gasps were heard. "I used Legilimency to find out and...and...I saw everything. Draco did not force her. She's willing."

Professor Moody started to say something but Harry cut him off.

"We failed. I'm sorry." Harry said as he looked at each of Ginny's brothers. He was grateful to see that they don't blame him at all but the disappointment on their faces was starting to weigh him down. He felt Luna's hand on his shoulders, discreetly leading him away from the group.

Chapter 15 - The Final Straw

"It's her choice, Harry. You can't do anything about it." said Luna quietly as she and Harry strolled around the Great Hall, uncaring of the danger it might cause them. They needed to get away before they suffocate from all the emotions running inside...fear...anger...frustration...

"She said we let her down....maybe she got so frustrated with the situation that she eventually decided to join the dark side." said Harry, staring glumly at the once majestic hall.

"Or maybe...she just fell in love...Sometimes people do foolish things when they're in love...maybe she saw a side of Draco that we have never seen before."

Harry vaguely remembered the hint of panic in Draco's voice when he suggested that they would like Ginny to cure them of their boredom but it was there. Even Hermione noticed his instinct to protect his 'slave' which was highly unnatural for him. His attitude baffled them all and from what he saw when he broke into Ginny's mind, he respected her. He sat in confusion, thinking in silence. So far, the side he was in had done nothing but hide and defend themselves. Some of the Order members severed their communication ties with them for fear of being found out. *'How could we possibly win this war if we don't even know what's happening to the others?'* he thought. *'Dumbledore, we need you, please come back'* he pleaded, hoping that his mentor could hear him. Harry concentrated hard and called the headmaster again but the familiar feeling of someone entering his mind did not come.

Meanwhile, the person Harry was trying to communicate with could not gather enough strength to reply...

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"Get the old man, now!" shouted the man with a slit-like nose at the trembling figure of a small man with a hand made of shining silver. He watched as the man struggle on his feet to bring what his master wanted. When he returned, he was levitating a limp form of an old man with long white hair and a beard that almost reached his waist. A magical metal chain ensured that he would not be able to escape IF he had enough energy for it.

"Enervate!" The limp figure slowly rose from his position to meet the gaze of his captor.

"Where's the boy?" asked Voldemort, arrogantly pointing his wand on him. The old man stubbornly shook his head.

"CRUCIO!" The old man fell on the floor and writhed in pain. "WHERE'S THE BOY?" Harry demanded without lifting the curse.

Again, there was eerie silence...a few minutes had passed before Harry released the man from the spell.

"Well...you're quite useless to me now...I don't care about the stupid prophecy anymore...and the youngest child of the blood traitor Weasley already joined our ranks..." The old man looked stunned at this bit of information. The dark lord merely laughed at his reaction. "You mean...you didn't know? The all-knowing Headmaster actually didn't know?" he chuckled evilly. "You're losing your touch, old man....maybe I should just kill you now. But I'm not that wicked --- tell me where the boy is and I'll let you live."

"You're the one losing your touch if you believe even for a second that I would succumb to your wishes." said the old man defiantly, looking him directly in the eye.

"Wonderful! What an amazing display of heroism..." The dark lord mockingly clapped his hands before he continued with narrowed eyes, "...unfortunately, I'm not in the mood for games tonight so tell me --- WHERE'S THE BOY?"

"You're a fool." said the old man calmly which amplified the wrath of his tormentor.

Voldemort raised his wand angrily at the old man who just proudly and peacefully waiting for his death.

"Death is but a next adventure..." the old man said, bracing himself for the blow.

"Aveda Ked --- "

"M-master! D-do you really have to do this? He might still be useful to us..." said the small man with a silver hand weakly, vainly trying to protect the old man who was once his mentor and confidant. He was rewarded with a vicious glare from his master.

"Did I hear you right? You're questioning my judgment now? Perhaps you would like to join him..." The terrified servant recoiled from his scrutiny.

"N-no, master! My apologies....Y-you may do as you wish..." he said in a pitiful voice, throwing an apologetic glance at the captive who was oblivious to the exchange. His eyes was fixed on something and his forehead was creased in intense concentration.

"Very well, then. Never let me doubt your loyalty again." The dark lord reverted his gaze to the old man whose strength might have faded but the spirit remained. He pointed his wand at the old man, positively gleeful at being able to finally eliminate one of his most powerful adversaries. He licked his lips before enunciating the words...

"Aveda Kedavra!"

Two words. Just two words...a flash of green light and the man who once courageously fought for the common good fell lifeless on the floor.

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"Harry.."

"Professor?"

"My time is running out...but you should continue the fight. You should understand..if I perish, the remaining wards will fall...The castle would not be able to protect you anymore. Inform Alastor at once. He'll know what to do..."

"Professor, why did you let them take you?"

"I'm not as invincible as you all think. I am already weak even before the attack on the school...there was no way to save them all if I did not sacrifice myself. I just used my remaining time wisely..."

"B-but how can I defeat him?"

"I already told you...the answer lies within your heart. Have faith in yourself and your friends...goodbye Harry...."

The aura of the greatest wizard of all time faded in Harry's mind...and was replaced by the image of a hooded figure, wand still pointed at the crumpled being and laughing triumphantly at his latest conquest. Behind him, the small man with a silver hand was trying hard to restrain his tears from falling on his pale cheeks.

"DUMBLEDORE! NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!" Harry snapped away from his stupor.

"What's wrong, Harry?" asked Luna, looking mystified at his outburst.

"Dumbled----" They both felt the walls vibrate vigorously. Remembering the Headmaster's last words, Harry grabbed Luna's hand and ran to the Room of Requirements where they found people nervously drawing out their wands. Some were crying hysterically, imagining the worst.

"Professor Moody!" shouted Harry when he found the man heading towards the door. From his worried expression, Harry could tell that he already had an idea as to what had happened.

"Potter, is he ---?" Harry nodded. Moody visibly paled and slowly, he saw tears running down his disfigured face. Professor McGonagall rushed to their side and saw their broken expression. She looked questioningly from Professor Moody to Harry.

"Dumbledore's gone. Voldemort killed him." said Harry, putting up a brave front so that the others would not lose hope.

"D-dumbledore is g-gone..."

Harry watched as the most strict professor crumble to the ground in despair. Moody was still crying silently, very unbecoming of a dark wizard catcher like him. The teachers from other schools had also hidden their faces from view. The professors he thought were the epitome of strength of the whole school were falling into pieces right before the eyes of everyone present in the room.

He scanned the room and saw the crushed faces of the others, showing signs of acceptance of defeat even before they joined the war. Were they just waiting for Dumbledore to save them all? And now that he was gone, were they thinking that the dark lord's takeover was finally complete? *'It's a good thing, no one else knew about the prophecy yet.'* he thought furiously.

"Are we all going to die now?" squeaked one small voice in fright.

Harry stared hard at all occupants in the room before replying angrily, "YES....WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE BECAUSE MOST OF YOU REFUSE TO FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE. HOW DARE YOU PUT ALL YOUR HOPE IN ONE MAN! HOW DARE YOU SEEK COMFORT HERE WHILE THE OTHERS ARE PUTTING THEIR LIVES IN DANGER TO KEEP YOU ALL SAFE!"

Everyone stopped moping to listen to the young man fuming with rage at the sight of their weakness.

"A FEW WEEKS AGO, OUR DEFENSE GROUP ROAMED AROUND THIS ROOM TO SEE IF ANYONE ELSE WAS CARED ENOUGH TO TRAIN BUT WERE WE SUCCESSFUL? NO! MOST JUST LAUGHED AT OUR EFFORTS AND SOME BLATANTLY

RIDICULED US! NOW, YOU TELL ME WHOSE FAULT IT IS IF THE PATHETIC DARK LORD SUCCEEDED..."

The onlookers noticed the golden glow that seemed to emanate from the young man as he spoke and backed away nervously.

"NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR MOURNING NOR IS THIS THE TIME TO CONCEDE! WE ALL HAVE TO FIGHT IF WE STILL CONSIDER THIS OUR HOME." He paused for a while and continued in a quiet but determined voice, "From now on, we won't hide anymore. We shall all train for battle. If the enemies come, we will fight them with all our heart. They thrive on our fears and weaknesses but they recoil from bravery and affection. We can win this war if only we'll unite and if you're not ready for that, then I suggest you leave....this world is not for you..."

Ashamed at his earlier display of vulnerability, Alastor Moody immediately summoned all remaining Order members for an emergency meeting as Harry requested. Also present were professors from other schools present within the room and all the DA members except for Ginny and Cho who hadn't been found by Dobby yet. House-elves' representatives were also invited.

Before they started the conference, all of them raised their wands to reconstruct the fallen wards. It was not as strong as the previous barriers but it would hold off the enemies until they're all ready for battle. As expected, Severus Snape was the first to react.

"Will someone enlighten me as to why we are all here? And why is that abominable boy presiding this meeting?" he smirked disdainfully at Harry.

"You may leave if you want to, Snivellus. No one's forcing you to stay." snapped Harry. Snape's eyes bulged as he heard what his old school enemies used to call him. He glared at Harry menacingly and seriously considered hexing him in front of everyone but was stopped by an even more menacing glare from the boy.

"Don't even think of it, Snivellus." he said venomously, his whole body glowing with anger once more. Snape fell silent.

"The situation has reached its worst. Dumbledore has been killed by Voldemort..." Harry paused. "...and Ginny went over to the dark side." Mrs. Weasley cried hysterically at that and Mr. Weasley hid his own anxiety to comfort her. Bill and Charlie just donned vacant expression for which Harry was thankful because he couldn't stand to see any more members breaking down at the news. The vacillating Percy was not invited so he did not have to worry about his reaction.

"Seeing the futility of relying on the Daily Prophet for the news, the DA decided to use the Quibbler to spread information that the war is not finished yet and that we could all do something to finally end it, with us as the winning side."

"Harry, we can't do that! The owls are being watched by our enemies. They'll just destroy them." commented Kingsley Shacklebolt, one of the employees of the Ministry of Magic who joined the Order.

"We know...that's why we are going to request the house-elves to do that for us. They can go past any anti-apparition barriers and are hardly noticed by most wizards. They can deliver the papers, right Dobby?" said Hermione confidently.

"Yes, of course, young Miss Granger. The house-elves are always willing to help the cause." replied Dobby excitedly while the other house-elves nodded their heads vigorously in agreement.

"Now, the operation is simple. We shall gather volunteer writers from this group and finish all the articles here. The house-elves will be the ones responsible for the reproduction and distribution of the papers so it wouldn't be that hard." said Harry. "Those who wish to write the articles can confer with Luna and Hermione after the meeting."

"Now, I want to hear your reports..." continued Harry as he sat carefully on his chair.

One by one, all the Order members who was away on a mission, informed them of their progress. Several giants already joined Voldemort but some agreed to help them if they can promise to give them a parcel of land in which they can dwell in peacefully after the war. The werewolves were still undecided due to the previous Minister's obvious contempt of their breed but they did not want Voldemort to rule them either. The goblins would join them if and only if Ludo Bagman would pay them the amount he owed them and that their share of the profits of the Gringotts Bank would be raised to twenty percent as opposed to their current ten percent share which they considered impropotional to the amount of work they were putting on the job. The vampires were hopeless for they believe they would benefit more if they choose Voldemort's side and there was no sign of the dementors yet after they left Azkaban.

Harry was carefully considering the demands of the giants and goblins. And he was thinking that the werewolves can be swayed if they can eliminate their distrust in the Ministry of Magic. It all boiled

down to the Ministry who was currently passive at the situation. "Who's running the ministry now?" he asked the ministry officials there.

"No one. Some were even afraid to go to work now." answered Mr. Weasley ruefully.

"Well, then how do we usually get a Minister?" asked Harry, disgusted at his own ignorance of the matter. He should have thought of this before.

"We usually vote but in times like this...." Mr. Weasley's voice trailed off. "... the minister can just be anyone within the ministry who is brave enough to take the responsibility." Harry sighed with relief.

"Is that all? So, Mr. Weasley you can be the new minister now and talk to the representative of the giants, goblins and werewolves. Give them what they want...it's not so much anyway compared to what they're going to do for us. Hagrid, Bill and Lupin will help you with it. Kingsley can take charge of organizing the intelligence network alongside with Tonks and Snape, much as I hate him. By the way Snape, Voldemort already knows you're a spy so better stay out of his way for a while." Snape looked alarmed at this news.

"As for the Dementors, the DA will take care of them. We just need information regarding their present location. All professors in this room will take charge of teaching Charms and Defense Against the Dark Arts except for Professor Moody who would be in charge of giving Auror training to all the DA members." continued Harry.

"Why are we all taking orders from him? He's just a little boy?" demanded Professor Leninski, a teacher from Durmstrang. The others looked stunned at his reaction. Obviously, they had not found it strange that Harry was giving them orders.

"I'm fed up with adults giving me orders which entails nothing but wait around for something to happen... I can't wait anymore... for every minute that I wait, someone is being tortured...someone is being killed...someone's life is being destroyed. It's about time we take some action... It's our turn now." replied Harry calmly, earning the

respect of all the wizards present.

The next few days were highlighted with trainings going on every corner of the Room of Requirements. The dueling club was restored once again to help the students prepare for battle. Petunia was getting her private training from none other than Professor McGonagall herself who had taken quite a liking to her. The Auror training was also going on very well....within a week, Harry was able to master wandless magic and a few DA members namely, Hermione, Ron, Luna and Neville were able to do it quite well although they still prefer to use wands because wandless magic was very exhausting.

But nothing surprised them more than the reaction of the whole wizarding community when they released the first edition of the Rebel Quibbler. Dobby and several house-elves appeared before the DA members after a very tiring session with Professor Moody, each of them carrying a handful of letters which was all addressed to the Quibbler. Hermione excitedly grabbed one letter and read it in front of everyone.

Dear Editor,

We're so glad to find that our world is not yet fully dominated by the poor excuse of a man who fancied himself as 'lord'. We're now teaching some defensive spells to our children here as you have suggested in your paper.

Keep up the good work!

Melissa Banes

Luna also grabbed another one, clearly exhilarated that so many had taken an interest at his father's paper. Her eyes were flooded with tears of joy as she read the letter.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for being brave enough to publish this paper despite of everything that is happening around us. I already sent 1000 galleons to the Gringotts bank so that you can continue your operation.

Whereas before we were already losing hope, now we have found courage again due to your efforts. We sincerely hope that through this paper, you can reach out more people to help the cause. I was one of those severely injured during the first war so I can't be of much help in the final battle but rest assured that I will always be at the good side and continue to give you my whole-hearted support.

Enclosed is an anecdote of what I and my friends had experienced during the first war. I hope you can publish it so that the others will know more about the cruelty of war and hopefully be enlightened that the dark side only prevails if the light allows it.

Thank you again and more power!

Louisa Alstrong

Neville gasped as he heard the name. "Hey! She's one of my grandma's friends!"

Dobby went to Harry and handed him a parchment. "Mr. Harry Potter, that one's from Miss Cho. I found her in one of the safehouse in her country. She's hiding there with her family. She asked me to give this to you personally."

Harry took the letter from his outstretched hand and read the letter.

Dear Harry,

I'm really sorry for my outburst. I know I have acted very childishly. Dobby gave me a copy of the Quibbler and I must admit that I'm very impressed with what you guys have done lately. And I'm quite ashamed for acting so irresponsibly in this hard times. While in hiding, I came to terms with the fact that you and I are really not meant for each other. Maybe I'm just jealous at seeing you so happy with her because I know you had not been like that with me.

Please forgive me...and if the DA will agree to it, I wish to return and help you fight. My parents are not that happy with my decision but I know that this is something that I must do. Please send me a letter

soon if you all want me to return.

Again, I'm sorry.

Cho

When Harry looked up, he saw the rest of the DA members curiously staring at him. Luna averted her gaze when he looked her way.

"What does she want?" asked Hermione.

"She said she's sorry and she wants to come back." replied Harry, eyeing Luna's expression carefully. "If we all agree, that is...do you want her to come back?"

"Yes!" exclaimed one very excited voice and they were very surprised to see that it was Lee. The others laughed at his reaction but no one expressed any objection.

"Well, Dobby, tell her that we want her back as soon as possible. We need all the help that we can get." said Harry with a smile as he walked over to Luna.

"You don't have to be afraid...she got over me now...she said so in the letter...and from what I can see, one of our friends is going to make sure that it stays that way." he gave her a smile and slowly bent to kiss her lightly on the lips.

"You're really amazing, Harry, do you that?" said Luna, surrendering herself to the kiss.

"As I've said before....It's our turn now." replied Harry, implying a totally different meaning to his words as he gave her another slow kiss that erased all the doubts from her mind.

Chapter 17 - The Wizard Intelligence Network

"Hey, Harry! I still can't believe you appointed my father as Minister of Magic....just like that." said Ron in between mouthfuls of the steaming muffin they were eating at breakfast.

"He deserved that position more than anyone and I really believe he would be very good at it." replied Harry earnestly, looking very tired but pleased that his best friend and the twins were not moping anymore about what happened to Ginny. Perhaps they had been so relieved to know that she was still alive that they didn't care anymore if she switched sides. Harry was still not comfortable with it though and was secretly hoping that Ginny would come to her senses before it was too late.

Dumbledore was another matter. His death came as a nasty shock but it also served as a catalyst for Harry. Much as he wanted his mentor to be with him in the final battle, he knew that he could not dwell on this remorseful thought. He was thrown in a devious battle of quick decisions and fast actions. He had to adjust....acceptance was the key. Dumbledore died a valiant man and he better make sure that his sacrifice would not be in vain.

The past few weeks had been very hard for them, what with all of the extra trainings, meetings and other things that they had to accomplish. It was a wonder that they could still have the luxury of eating together and chatting during meal times. But it was all worth it. All the physical pain, gruelling mind exercises, and several sleepless nights were all worth it. They would get their world back.

"By the way, where's Lee?" asked Hermione, noticing the empty chair beside Ron.

"He went to ensure that umm...Cho get back here safely." replied Neville who almost choked on his tea in haste.

Hermione was about to say something when the door opened revealing a triumphant Lee and a highly embarrassed Cho. Cho stole an apprehensive look at Luna before she cautiously approached the table, a little nervous about the others' reaction even if Lee already

assured her that everything was alright.

"Mmm...hi, guys. Sorry for everything." said Cho, thinking that it would be better to start with a personal apology first.

"It's okay. Let's forget about the past. We're all glad you came back." said Luna, smiling warmly at her.

"Yes, it's okay, Cho. Don't worry and besides, we need you to help Hermione with the power revival potion or have you forgotten about that?" said Harry, motioning the new arrivals to have a sit.

"Oh, no, how could I forget? I asked my grandmother about it too and she was able to provide me with some useful information to make the potion easier to prepare but I won't bore you with the details. You can trust Hermione and I would be able to brew it well." answered Cho, blushing slightly as she noticed the adoring glances that Lee was sending her way.

"Speaking of which, when are we going to attack the dementors, Harry?" asked Ron eagerly. Hermione rolled her eyes but Harry merely chuckled at his best friend's question.

"My, my! A little warfreak, are we? Would you still be excited if I tell you we need to get past Aragog and his children to do that?" inquired Harry, poker faced as he stared at his friend's appalled expression. Seamus and the twins could not suppress their reactions though. Soon, all those who had heard their little escapade in the forest during their second year were roaring with laughter.

"Hey, I'm just joking." appealed Harry as Ron bodily lifted him up from his chair and tickled him on the ribs mercilessly. Harry retaliated by grabbing hold of Ron's foot which he knew was Ron's most ticklish point. Everybody started placing bets at once as to who was going to give up first.

"I bet two sickles for Harry." said George loudly.

"So much for brotherly loyalty." muttered Ron grouchily.

"I'm for Ron, three sickles. There, little brother, I'm rooting for you. Don't you dare lose." threatened Fred.

"I'm for Harry, ten sickles." shouted Neville in between.

"A galleon for Harry ---" said Luna, joining in the fun.

"Ron! Two galleons!" even Hermione loosened after a while.

The two boys continued tickling each other, very much aware about what their friends were doing and clearly enjoying it. The table was filled with shouts of "Go, Ron!" and "Get him, Harry!" and some of the students from other schools came nearer to watch. Professor McGonagall went to the Ministry with Professor Moody so no one was there to reprimand them.

"ARE WE FIGHTING A WAR HERE OR NOT!" Harry and Ron stopped at once to find out who rudely interrupted their little show.

"I came here immediately after locating the highly dangerous dementors thinking that our oh-so-wonderful leader was itching to hear the report but what do I see --- the arrogant little boy who fancied himself saviour of the wizarding world and his beloved sidekick manhandling each other and a rowdy bunch of bloody Gryffindors egging them on." spat Snape furiously. "If I had known, I wouldn't have wasted my precious time on that mission."

Everyone stared shamefully at their feet as Snape spent almost an hour lecturing them on the seriousness of war and how all of them should behave at such a grave situation. It was Harry who recovered first.

"It's not a crime to have fun for a while, Snape. It keeps us sane but I guess you wouldn't understand....so let's hear your report." he said.

"What? Here? In front of so many people?" asked Snape incredulously.

"Yes, is there any problem?" countered Harry, chuckling softly at seeing Snape's discomfort.

"This is ridiculous! I refuse to share my most top secret findings in front of all this ---- I don't trust them! You should, of all people, know the importance of secrecy, Potter!" hissed Snape angrily at Harry. How dare he do this to him!

"You, of all people, should know the importance of not having too many secrets, Snape." Harry paused, struggling to put the image of Sirius out of his mind. "It inspires distrust and a feeling of inferiority. We are all fighting a war. We are all equal here." Then he whispered in an undertone. "But of course, I took some precaution. I'm not that stupid, you know. I had Hermione put a hex on the application papers. Trust me, if anyone was stupid enough to betray us, that person would pay dearly for his or her mistake."

Snape calmed down a bit after hearing that. "I sincerely hope you won't regret this, Potter. I still think the idea is stupid." Harry merely shrugged his shoulder at that. "Well, as you know, the dementors have been very quiet since the breakout from Azkaban. It's very fortunate that I stumbled upon a group of stupid death-eaters who didn't recognize me."

"Aren't they all?" snorted Hermione.

"Maybe you would like to finish the report, Miss-know-it-all Granger?" Hermione muttered a hasty apology. Snape continued. "With a few carefully placed questions, I was able to discern that the dementors are being held captive by none other than Voldemort himself in an empty wizarding village --- probably to starve so that when let out, they can wreak more havoc to the whole wizard community." Very audible gasps were heard around the room. "The only problem is they did not have any idea where the village is ... but according to them, it's the same village that the dementors demolished forty years ago." Snape concluded his report, looking sheepish for not being able to discover the most important detail.

"How many are they?" asked Harry.

"A hundred and sixty including the leader." replied Snape matter-of-factly.

"A HUNDRED AND SIXTY?!?" exclaimed Seamus, clearly horrified at the idea of fighting such a huge number of dementors.

"Any death-eater guards?" asked Luna, already mentally calculating the odds.

"Only three and they are only guarding the gate."

"It's okay, then. I was afraid there would be more. The odds is six enemies to one DA member --- not bad." said Harry.

"ARE YOU INSANE? HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY DO THAT?" exclaimed Parvati.

"Yeah, we might be dead before we even tackle half of them." agreed Colin.

"Well, considering that Harry fought off nearly a hundred dementors on our third year, I would say it would be fairly easy. He was not even in top condition then." said Ron, grinning at the others.

"Potter, you can always ask the help of the order members for that." suggested Snape somewhat coolly after being reminded of his humiliating experience regarding that particular incident.

"No, Snape. The DA can handle it but I need the names of the dementors' victims in that village forty years ago. If possible, bring them all here when you find them."

Snape nodded and left instantly as if he could not stand being in the same room as Harry longer than necessary. When he left, Harry immediately called his aunt and discreetly ordered the DA members to follow him to the training room. Letting everybody in the room hear the report is one thing but letting them know their plan was an entirely different thing.

"So, Aunt Petunia, can you tell us where your village was?" he immediately asked after everyone had settled down. The captives were already relocated to a secure cell within the Ministry of Magic so

they did not have to worry about them escaping for now.

"The village is called Crigod's Commune. The most powerful and decent wizards lived there and nobody had an inclination to go to the dark side. I made a map to make it easier for you." said Aunt Petunia, spreading out a large map for everyone to see. She pointed her finger at a rather large area on the parchment. "This is the place and this is the gate -- the only entrance to the village. You may enter it only if you had a resident with you."

"I was wondering....if it was so meticulously concealed, how did Voldemort order the dementors to attack the village?" asked Ron.

"Because a resident was captured and Voldemort placed him on imperius curse to lead the dementors to the place."

"Crigod.....hey, that's a scrambled Godric!" exclaimed Luna. Hermione eyed her with interest. "Godric Gryffindor must have owned that place. It is even possible that most of the residents there are related to him."

"You're really not as far out as you seem, Luna." said Hermione, giving her a genuine smile. "I think we're on the right track, then. The wizards from that village would be able to help us turn the tide to our favor."

"Harry, according to my grandma, the one who could destroy the king of dementors would automatically be their next leader." said Cho, glad that she was able to discover it.

"Oh, is that so? Interesting!" said Harry, beaming at them all as if he just thought of something really remarkable. "Let's keep that information to ourselves...."

"Aunt Petunia, don't forget to grip the galleon tightly if you find someone suspicious lurking around the area, okay?" said Harry to his aunt who was nervously placing the galleon in one of her pockets. She nodded in agreement. Her husband was still sulking in their room but Dudley went out to wish her mother luck. These past few days, Harry noticed a slight change in his cousin's usual demeanor but he could not place it yet. Something was clearly bothering him. "I'll talk to him later." he thought.

Luna performed the disillusionment charm on Aunt Petunia and herself. Everyone mimicked her action and silently walked out of the Room of Requirements so as not to attract attention from the others. Professor Moody and Professor McGonagall wanted to join them but Harry politely refused stating that they were needed more in the castle in case the death-eaters arrive unexpectedly. Moody gruffly conceded but only after creating several portkeys for them to use in case things got too much for them.

The DA members decided to execute the plan right after the meeting. They could all conjure a powerful patronus charm and there was no need to wait any longer. They already had weeks of preparation for that and they knew it would be more beneficial for them to attack the dementors while the sun was still up.

Aunt Petunia anxiously steered the group to a broken telephone booth in muggle London. She quickly dialled one-nine-six-eight and spoke in a clear voice. "Petunia Evans to go home to Crigod's Commune with twenty eight young friends."

"The village has been destroyed. No one has been there for quite some time. Are you sure you're up to it?" asked the operator.

"Yes." replied Harry's aunt curtly.

"Very well." said the operator. Several badges came out of the part of the phone where change were usually discharged. Aunt Petunia got the first one bearing her name and distributed the remaining badges labeled Friend #1, Friend #2 and so forth to the others. "Pin the

badges on your cloaks and think of Crigod's Commune. Hold each other tight and at the count of five, all of you shall be transported to the village. Good luck!" the operator instructed. They followed the instruction carefully.

.....5.....4.....3.....2.....1.....POOF! They all landed smoothly on a clear field of nothingness.

"Is this it?" asked Fred, slightly disappointed.

"Not quite...." Aunt Petunia uttered a few words that sounded like "Crigod, standing before you is the first child of the Evans clan returning. Please let us in." and a magnificent door engraved with "Crigod's Commune" magically appeared before them. Gold and silver metals intertwined to form a very complex design of a golden lion swallowing a hideously huge serpent. They all gaped at the marvelous vision before them. Even Petunia seemed overwhelmed by its grandeur. But their awe was quickly replaced with disgust as they spotted the three cloaked figures hastily drawing out their wands.

"There's an interference in the wards. Quick, search the area!" they heard one tall death-eater commanded the one nearest to them.

"There's no one here, Dolohov. We must be imagining things." replied the assigned death-eater.

"Oh, so the tall one's Antolin Dolohov! Leave him to me. I believe we have some unfinished business." whispered Hermione urgently to Harry as she heard the name of the one responsible for the several months of agony she was forced to endure in the hospital wing last school year. Harry said nothing.

They watched in amusement as the death-eaters argued with one another about the presence of an intruder in the area. They quickly positioned themselves when they saw the three death-eaters go in different directions to investigate.

"Stupefy!" Three DA members shouted at once, catching the three death-eaters unaware.

"Petrificus Totalus!" Another batch of DA members cursed the enemies causing them to fall helplessly on the ground.

Hermione was about to perform the same slashing movement that Dolohov used on her when she felt a firm hand clutch her wrist.

"Don't! We're not supposed to harm them. It will destroy the plan." whispered Luna. Hermione glared at her but refrained from doing the very harmful spell.

"The veritaserum." ordered Harry suddenly. The assigned DA members quickly poured three drops of the potion to each of the captives' mouths.

"Are there any death-eaters inside?" asked Harry.

"None." one of the death-eaters replied against his will.

"The dark lord will get you once he finds out! You can't get away with this!" exclaimed another.

"If he finds out....but what would you tell? You can't even see us." chuckled Harry.

"I can smell the stench of a mudblood and blood traitors anywhere!" spat the one called Dolohov maliciously, wrinkling his nose in disgust as if he was smelling something foul. Several members had to keep their temper in check to prevent them from attacking the now helpless enemies. Ignoring the taunt, Harry continued the interrogation.

"Where's Voldemort? What's your mission here?"

"We don't know. We've been here for two months already and the dark lord has not yet communicated with us. Our only mission is to ensure that the dementors won't be able to escape until it's time." The death-eater is obviously in pain for trying to stop himself from talking but the potion is too strong for him.

"Time for what?" asked George venomously.

"N-next full moon. Our lord would attack the werewolves and the dementors would help him force the beasts to follow his commands."

"Oh! So it's another brilliant plan to blackmail the werewolves into supporting his evil mission. Anything else? Does your stupid lord have any other immediate plans to conquer the wizarding world?" prodded Harry.

"Don't call him stupid! He's the most powerful wizard alive! Even the pathetic Potter boy won't be able to stop him!" exclaimed Dolohov.

"Do you really believe that? Well, I have news for you --- You're wrong!"

"A large number of death-eaters are going to attack the ministry tomorrow morning." said another death-eater, unable to stop himself.

The DA members looked concerned at that news but Harry just looked unperturbed. "Are there any other plans?" All the death-eaters shook their heads.

"Do you know what happened to Jack Lovegood?" ventured Luna, hoping to find something about his father's predicament.

"No." Again, all three shook their heads. Sensing that they won't get any other relevant information, Harry quickly performed a memory charm on them before forcing them to drink a very powerful sleeping potion.

"Sleep tight! When you wake up, you won't remember anything that transpired today. Consider yourselves very fortunate that we didn't kill you."

Aunt Petunia quickly opened the door and motioned all DA members to run inside. She slammed the door shut as soon as the last one had entered, leaving her to spy outside.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" shouted Harry and an enormous stag proudly galloped around the place. True to Dumbledore's warning, the disillusionment charm did not fool the dementors at all. The group

had not even walked a dozen steps when they were viciously attacked by the cloaked figures. "REMOVE THE DISILLUSIONMENT CHARM NOW!" All became visible at once.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" a shining silver otter erupted from Hermione's wand.

"Harry! Go find the king immediately!" shouted Luna. "Don't worry about us!"

"Yeah! GO NOW!" Ron shouted too in between two starving dementors.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" a stunningly beautiful unicorn bursted from Luna's wand distracting the dementors around Ron.

"HARRY! DEMETER IS THE TALLEST AND IT WEARS THE UGLIEST HOOD!" shouted Cho before she fainted.

Harry looked around and saw several silver patronus of different shapes and sizes charge on the famished dementors. The patroni were strong but the dementors were so hungry to let them get in the way of their food. Several of their members had already fainted and he knew that things would really get nasty if he did not find the king soon. He shot several patronus around him before he saw the tallest and most powerful dementor he ever encountered.

"No! Not Harry! Please! Not Harry....take me instead!" Harry could hear his mom's plea as he approached the king. Think of something very happy! An image of winning the Quidditch cup floated on his mind. "EXPECTO PATRONUM!" His patronus vanished before it even got near the king. At the corner of his eye, he saw some dementors attempting to suck the souls of the DA members who had fainted. But Luna and Hermione quickly conjured powerful patroni which drove them away.

"Go, Lily! You have to escape now!" his father's distressed voice rang alarmingly in his mind. Harry gradually felt himself weakening despite his tremendous effort to stay conscious.

"HARRY, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? GET HIM NOW!" he heard another horrified yell. It was Ron.

"HARRY! PLEASE GET HIM NOW! YOU STILL OWE ME A PROPER DATE, YOU KNOW!" another familiar voice screamed at him. He looked up and saw his courageous girlfriend surrounded with dementors and they were so dangerously close....

"NOOOOOO!!!! I won't let your minions suck their soul! EXPECTO PATRONUM!" Again, the silver stag just bounced off the king that was currently gliding his way. He was having some serious doubts now if he was really the chosen one. But he better be the ONE or he would just have led his friends to their distraction --- all for nothing. Dumbledore's last words echoed on his ears...Have faith in yourself and your friends... Harry's mind was then flooded with memories of his parents' sacrifice...his encounter with the basilisk...his spectacular escape from the graveyard where Cedric was murdered cold-bloodedly...Sirius' untimely demise...all the attempts on his life and finally, the prophecy...then the realization hit him. "I'M THE ONE!" a sudden burst of confidence filled his heart and soon an image of Luna kissing him passionately lingered in his mind.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" The most enormous patronus he ever conjured erupted from his wand and expertly stopped the king from drawing closer. In fact, it was temporarily paralyzed. He seized this chance and pointed his wand to the silver stag. "PATRONO HALKUM!" The stag immediately swooped on the immobile king of dementors and started to suck its soul.

The other dementors stopped attacking the students at once and glided to where Harry was in an attempt to help their leader. But they were too late.... Demeter was now crumpled on the floor, defeated. The conscious DA members came closer to watch in amazement as the most feared dementor slowly transformed into an ordinary one. All the dementors, including the former king, glided around and formed a battalion formation in front of a very confused Harry.

Luna ran towards Harry and enveloped him into a tight embrace. "Are you alright, hon?" she asked, the sugary term of endearment rolling freely from her lips. Harry, not quite accustomed to mushy terms

directed his way, actually felt pleased that he had someone who call him 'hon' now. He raised his cloak to cover both of them, expertly shielding them from everyone's view. After a few minutes, a very flushed-looking Luna and a slightly disoriented Harry faced the group that was now impishly throwing them knowing looks.

"Err---What do I do now?" he frantically asked Hermione.

"You're the new king now, aren't you? I reckon they're waiting for your instruction." replied Hermione impatiently.

"Oh, right, I forgot, sorry!" The others giggled at that.

Harry quickly addressed the dementors. "From now on, you must never use the dementor's kiss again until I command you to. Voldemort will command you to attack the werewolves on the next full moon and you will dutifully follow his orders but never suck the soul of any one...not even werewolves. You can feed on their fears but don't overdo it. Pretend that nothing out of the ordinary had happened here. Most of all, let Voldemort believe that you are still on his side. When he asks for Demeter, tell him the king died of hunger. Do you understand?" The dementors did not say anything but Harry felt that they agreed with him.

The group headed to the training room after fighting an intense desire to explore the glorious place. Five of them were unconscious and a number were still a little dizzy but nothing that a little piece of chocolate won't cure. Aunt Petunia's tear-stained face accompanied with trembling shoulders did not help either. Professor Moody almost dropped the flask he was holding when he noticed them arrive with five bodies floating beside them. Professor McGonagall let out a silent scream and Madam Pomphrey quickly handed each of them a chocolate bar. Behind them was a terror-stricken Dudley, clutching his mouth as if he was about to puke. Apparently, they were all thinking the worst.

"Hey, have you no faith in us at all?" asked Fred, pretending to look hurt but was finding it difficult to restrain his amusement at their reactions.

"Hail to our new ---- !" shouted Colin but was stopped with a not-so-subtle kick on his left foot courtesy of Luna. He looked at her questioningly but he was met with several glares not only from Luna but also from the other members.

"Learn when not speak, Colin." whispered Hermione, sensing his discomfort.

"She's right, you know." added Ron with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

The professors noticed the secretive glances that passed the members but decided did not press on it. Whatever it was, they were not sure they really want to know.

"Eh-erm! So I take it that you were successful in your mission despite of the umm--- a little casualty?" asked Moody.

"Fortunately, yes." said Hermione casually as if fighting a battalion of dementors was an everyday occurrence but her jubilant expression stated otherwise.

"Well, I better go back to the ministry now so they can hasten the process of locating the residents of...what's the name of the place again?"

"Crigod Commune. Merlin! I just remembered you have to warn them too!...Death-eaters will attack the ministry tomorrow morning!" exclaimed Ron, thinking of his father immediately.

Professor Moody quickly disappeared after hearing the news.

"Do you think they'll need our help?" asked George apprehensively, clearly fearing for his father's life too.

"Maybe....or maybe not...Let's see. Moody has one of our galleons. I trust that he won't be too proud to call for help if the need arises. For now, we better take a rest. We can't fight anybody at this state." said Harry, pretending to stifle a yawn but his tight hold on Luna did not go unnoticed by the others' watchful stares.

"As you wish, your majesties!" teased Fred when Professor McGonagall turned her back to do something, bowing ridiculously low in a mock imitation of the house-elves' usual display of servitude.

"Cut it out, Fred!" said Harry, his cheeks turning crimson in embarrassment. But the DA members did not listen to his plea. The room was soon filled with hums to the tune of "Weasley is our king" but with a suspiciously loud snickers when they reach the part of "Weasley".

Chapter 19 - Are you mad, Mad-Eye?!?

Despite the DA members' exhaustion, sleep did not have its usual appeal especially the Weasleys who were quite agitated about the upcoming attack on the ministry. They reluctantly took turns taking a nap while the others impatiently waited for news. The next morning proved more nerve-wracking for everyone. They all ate breakfast as if it was just another unpleasant chore that they must complete.

Ron was currently pacing the room back and forth, running his hand through his hair making it more dishevelled than it already was. Hermione was trying to placate Ron's anxiety by hitting him with the Cheering Charm but it had no lasting effect. The twins were dealing with their tension by enticing some unsuspecting students from other schools into eating their Ton-Tongue Toffee, Canary Creams, and Puking Pastilles much to Hermione's obvious annoyance.

Cho was not doing any better, knowing her mother was also working at the ministry. She kept chewing on her lower lip until they bled. Even the Creevey brothers were uncharacteristically silent as they developed some more pictures for the next edition of the Quibbler. They were usually a talkative pair who did not seem to run out of irritating questions.

They all just huddled in front of Professor McGonagall's desk, hoping to hear any news soon but none came. Harry was silently debating with himself whether he would dare suggest to go to the ministry or to just let the adults handle the problem. Luckily, Luna unwittingly helped him with his decision.

"You know, I don't think Professor Moody would dare call for help..." said Luna silently while leafing through an ancient spell book.

"And why is that?" asked Hermione. Ron stopped pacing for a while to listen to Luna's reply.

"I'm not sure but I think Professor Moody might find it embarrassing on the Order's part to ask for help from kids like us...Besides, he might think that it would be too dangerous for us..." said Luna, casually flipping her hair that accidentally fell on her face.

"Oh!" said Hermione, apparently getting Luna's point.

"Come on! Let's go there and take a look. We can just go back if everything's okay." said Ron, instantly flexing his muscles as if he meant to tackle the opponents with his bare hands.

"Hmm....I don't think all of us should go..." The DA members glared at Harry. "...at once. Only a select few should go there now then the next batch will follow if necessary." he continued.

"Who will be in the first batch?" asked Neville.

"The ones who were with me in the ministry last school year." replied Harry, ignoring the gnawing feeling of remorse as he recalled that Ginny had been a part of that group. One of the few who bravely fought against evil. 'Malfoy, what did Ginny see in you to make her turn against us...

"Hah! I'm soooooooo glad we can apparate now!" exclaimed Ron as their feet settled on the ground.

Neville and Hermione smiled too as they remember their mode of transportation the last time they went to the ministry. Sure, they could all see thestrals now, but it did not make it more comfortable for everyone to ride those magical creatures who had an affinity for flesh and blood. It was a little creepy to say the least!

Harry and Luna were currently surveying the surroundings.... Nothing was amiss....everything seemed normal. Maybe the death-eaters decided to forego their plans....maybe they thought it would be quite foolish to attack the ministry that was overflowing with aurors not to mention several more competent wizards....or maybe.....

KRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRIIIIIIIINGGGGGGGGGGGGGG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

..... maybe they were just late.

"INTRUDERS!!!!!!!!!!!"

"POSITION

EVERYONE!!!!!!"

"INFORM

THE

MINISTER!!!!"

"Hey, Harry! Are we the intruders they were talking about?"
whispered Hermione.

"I don't know..." replied Harry, motioning for the others to hide under the tables. They were disillusioned but a little more caution won't hurt.
"Let's observe for a while."

Dark hooded figures slowly advanced towards the crowd of ministry officials unable to cast spells as they witnessed the figures casually throw cruciatus curse left and right. Each was frozen on the spot as one of the menacing figures addressed their audience.

"Turnover the ministry to the Dark Lord now and we'll let you live..."

"In your dreams!" said a young ministry employee, quickly sending a stunning spell to the speaker.

The speaker merely chuckled at the employee's attempt before casting the killing curse on him. "I abhor nuisances. Where's the minister?"

The present DA members stared in shock at the young employee who was cold-bloodedly murdered by the death-eater. "Come on, where are the Order members?" thought Harry. Ron was itching to take a shot at the enemies but the rest prevented him from doing so.

"It's not yet time, Ron." whispered Neville, clutching his wand tightly in preparation.

"WHERE'S THE MINISTER?" shouted the speaker.

"Here I am. What do you want?" said Arthur Weasley condescendingly as he made his way to the front.

"Ahh, Arthur, so nice to see you again. If you would kindly step down from your position and hand it over to the Dark Lord...." the speaker

pointed his wand to the dead employee. ".... you would not want to encounter the same fate, would you? Perhaps we can offer you loads of gold and a number of delectable women in exchange for your cooperation.... I am sure you would enjoy 'playing' with them more than you do with your portly wife. What do you think?"

Mr. Weasley was fuming with rage, his face now the same shade as his hair. He pointed his wand at the speaker and spoke clearly for everyone to hear. "Lucius, I love my wife and I don't think any amount of gold can buy the happiness I feel with my family and knowing that I am doing the right thing. Tell your master that I would never relinquish my position to someone like him. I am not like Cornelius Fudge whom you could easily manipulate given the proper incentive. I work for the common good."

"I'm afraid you'd make it difficult. Pity, you could have benefitted more from my proposal...but you lost your chance. Aveda ----" Lucius was suddenly thrown off balance by a variety of spells sent by no other than the five DA members who could not stand the situation anymore. But they were surprised when a small hooded figure ran in front of Mr. Weasley in an attempt to protect him.

"NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOT MY FATHER!!!!!!!!!!!" shouted the small hooded figure. The DA members stared at one another in surprise....Ginny? A disgruntled death-eater sent a binding curse at her followed by a cruciatus curse. The figure collapsed on the floor, with her hood falling off her face. It was Ginny!

Ron quickly rushed to his sister's side and carried her to an unoccupied room, not leaving her side.

The other ministry employees who had already recovered from their shock followed the lead of the unseen forces that helped them. The building immediately became chaotic as an array of curses were thrown back and forth the opposing groups.

"Moody! What took you so long?" The DA members who positioned themselves close to the minister, heard him shout at the new arrivals --- Mad-Eye Moody, Molly, Lupin, Bill and several more whom they did not know. Knowing that Moody would be able to see through their

disillusionment charm, they quickly retreated to the far end of the room before he could notice them.

"Traffic!" growled Moody which caused several eyebrows to raise in disbelief.

"IMPEDIMENTA!" shouted Molly at a group of death-eaters.

"STUPEFY!" shouted Bill at another batch.

"INFERNUS GALACTICUS!" shouted another. Harry and his friends watched in amazement as the person formed a ball of fire in his hands and hurled it forcefully to the largest group of death-eaters in the building.

"Cool!" exclaimed Neville.

"CRUCIO!" countered a death-eater to the one who conjured the fire throwing spell but it was successfully dodged by the person.

"Moody! There are too many enemies....call Potter's group now!" shouted Mr. Weasley again as he saw more death-eaters arrive at the ministry.

"No, Arthur! They are just kids....this is too dangerous for them!" immediately hollered Molly in between curses.

The DA members looked meaningfully at each other at that.

"Moody, call them now or there won't be a ministry in an hour." Mr. Weasley said, ignoring his wife.

"No, Arthur! Molly is right. We can't put their lives in danger." argued Moody while sending a powerful conjunctivitis curse at a nearby enemy.

The DA members continued to fight but the increasing number of death-eaters are proving to be too much for them. Harry and the others immediately tightened their grips on the galleon to signal the others to come as soon as possible. Moody, noticing the burning

feeling in his pocket, quickly took out the galleon and was shocked to find the words "Help! Ministry!" flashing before his eyes. He scanned the room until his eyes fell on the five young disillusioned figures fighting death-eaters at the far corner of the room.

"POOTTEEERRRR! What are you doing here?" he shouted at the group who was currently exchanging curses with a round of death-eaters.

"ARE YOU MAD, MAD-EYE?!? You can't handle all these death-eaters....Why did you refuse to ask for our help?" replied Harry furiously as he threw another curse to the death-eater attacking him.

"We swore to Dumbledore that we will protect you at all cost!" answered Moody with the same ferocity.

"If by protecting me, more will suffer, thank you very much but I won't allow it." said Harry.

"Hrmp! Let's talk about this later..." said Moody grumpily before venting his frustration on a nearby death-eater who was foolish enough to stray within his line of vision.

Harry agreed although still fuming about the adult's inconsistencies... He noticed they did not have qualms about letting them face the dementors. Anyway, Moody was right...this was not the time for arguments...He reverted his attention to the death-eaters who were now slowly realizing that maybe they had taken more than they could chew. He noticed that some did not even seem that ruthless in battle, not really experts in maneuvers and tactics - one advantage that DA members had due to the countless training. Was it possible that they were fighting teenagers like themselves? Harry shuddered at the thought.

"SERPENSORTIA!"

The whole group was distracted by the sudden appearance of snakes in the area. The death-eaters laughed mockingly at the terror-stricken ministry employees as they conjured more snakes from their wands. Several aurors and order members attempted to vanish the snakes

using fire and vanishing spells but the snakes kept on coming courtesy of the death-eaters who seemed to think that they had everything under control now.

Harry hastily removed the disillusionment charm and slowly approached the snakes. "Cover me." he informed his friends and the Order members.

"Hissssss.....hissss....." (Please don't attack us...we're good people....) Harry spoke to the snakes.

"Hissss.....hissss....." (We don't want to attack anyone...It's just that they ordered us to...) replied the snakes.

"Hisssssssss.....hisssssssssss" (I think we're linked somehow because I have the gift to speak with you. Please trust me. Don't harm me and my friends. Why don't you attack the deatheaters? They were the ones who disturbed your peace.)

The snakes slowly nodded their heads and turned to the death-eaters who were too stunned to react. Some ministry employees were looking at Harry strangely too.

"Didn't your master inform you that I'm a parseltongue?" It was Harry's turn to mock the enemies now.

"EXPELLIARMUS!" Harry, Luna, Hermione, Neville and the other DA members who had now arrived shouted in unison, taking advantage of their temporary stillness. Several wands immediately flew to their hands rendering the other death-eaters useless.

"PETRIFICUS TOTALUS!" They shouted again and more death-eaters toppled on the floor, screaming obscenities at them.

Moody and the other aurors quickly performed a spell similar to the one Dumbledore used to bind the death-eaters. They had apprehended at least 50 of them. Lucius, seething with anger, ordered the remaining hooded figures to flee. He gave Harry one disdainful glare before he declared, "You will soon wish you had

never been born...." With that said, Lucius disappeared to report to his master.

Chapter 20 - The Prodigal Daughter Returns....

"Father!!!!!!!!!!!!!! It's Ginny! We need to help her!" Ron frantically shouted as the tension in the building subsided.

Molly quickly rushed to her daughter's side, ignoring the crowd that were now rounding up the apprehended death-eaters and removing their hoods for proper identification. "Oh, my poor baby! What spell hit her?"

"Is s-she ---?" The Weasley twins asked nervously after seeing the unmoving body of their youngest sister.

"NO!" exclaimed Ron and glared at the twins as if that was a very unthinkable thing to say.

"Who did this to her?" demanded Bill as he, too, stared at the unconscious figure, pain still clearly etched on her pale face.

"Stunning spell and the cruciatus curse. A death-eater cursed her when she ran in front of Mr. Weasley." said Harry while wondering why Draco, the cunning and manipulative bastard she chose over them, did not come to her rescue. And to think he had been gullible enough to assume that he cared enough for Ginny to not let anybody harm her in any way! 'I should have brought her back when I had the chance...'

"Oh, my darling little girl!" cried Mrs. Weasley.

"Come on, Molly, it's okay. We just need to bring her to Madam Pomphrey." said Mr. Weasley, carrying their youngest child carefully.

The emotions that engulfed the Room were very intense and diverse as they all waited for Madam Pomphrey's declaration about Ginny's condition. Of course, the Weasleys were simply ecstatic about her being with them now no matter what she had done. They seemed to think that her attempt to save her father had been enough retribution on her part and that signified that she was still not as corrupted as they had first thought.

Harry, Hermione and Neville were quite relieved although there were several questions that nagged their minds. How come Ginny followed the order to attack the ministry when she knew full well what could possibly happen if her father refused? Or did she know? What about Draco? How come there were more young death-eaters than adult dark wizards in the attack? Shouldn't there be more experienced death-eaters there or were they not expecting such strong resistance?

The other DA members were also occupied with theories of their own. Some seemed content about the positive turn of events but one was quite suspicious about the motives behind Ginny's actions ---- Luna. Something did not feel right and she always trusted her instincts. She gazed around the room, her forehead furrowed as she contemplated on what SHE SAW happened and what might have REALLY happened. Her lips curled in disgust as if she thought of something unpleasant.

Harry did not notice her reaction because he was sitting beside her and could not see her face....but Hermione did.

"What's wrong, Luna?" she asked, curious about what made her react that way.

Luna opened her mouth as if to say something but decided against it. "Nothing." she said simply and closed her eyes to avoid Hermione's questioning stare.

Oblivious to the exchange, Harry turned to Hermione to ask her about the progress of the Power Reviving Potion.

"It's fine, Harry. We only need the essence of the Patronus' Kiss but we can only add that at Crigod's Commune and should immediately be administered to the wizards or else it would not be that effective." replied Hermione.

"That's great!" said Harry.

"Mr. Potter, meet me in the Training Room. We need to talk." said Professor McGonagall sternly as she walked silently to the place.

Harry followed. It was not a request. It was a command and it made him slightly nervous about what they were going to talk about.

As he closed the door behind him, his jaw dropped as his eyes fell on the very serious faces of Professor McGonagall, Moody, Bill, Arthur, Lupin, Snape and the person he remembered as the one who conjured the impressive fireball spell. 'Why are they all here? This is worse than I thought.'

"H-have I done something wrong?" he asked tentatively.

"How clever of you to think that, Potter!" said Snape disdainfully. Harry simply ignored his remark.

"Why did you go there when I specifically ordered you to stay here?" asked Moody.

"No regard for the rules just like his arrogant father." Snape muttered under his breath.

"Enough, Severus." said Moody as if admonishing a naughty child.

"I-er We were afraid that your forces won't be enough against the enemies so we decided to check. We'll only stay if we think we're needed and it turned out that we were. You were late." said Harry.

"And thank goodness your group was there, Harry." said Arthur Weasley to prevent the brewing argument.

Moody looked a bit ashamed but disgruntled at the same time and Snape pursed his lips, annoyed that Harry did not get the tongue-lashing he expected.

"Relax, Harry. We did not bring you here to discuss that. We're here to talk about Crigod's Commune residents. Severus had already discovered the names and locations of the persons involved. Unfortunately, convincing them would not be that easy even after lifting the memory charms. They had already been so accustomed to muggle life that they might be reluctant to return." said Professor Lupin.

"I have already talked to a few and they all said they needed time to think about it first. Some are already dead." said Snape while staring down at his report to hide his face.

Harry tried to conceal his disappointment at the news but found it a very tedious task. So, that explains why they wore such grim expressions. After everything, he imagined this would be the easiest part. It never even crossed his mind that there might be other factors to consider...like the involved persons' wariness to return to the lives they had already forgotten.

"So what do we do now?" he weakly asked.

"We wait..." replied Arthur calmly.

"WE WAIT?!? AGAIN?!?" Harry suddenly exploded at hearing those words. How he hated hearing them....the bane of his existence!

The others glanced at him nervously as he radiated a powerful aura that seemed to electrify the room. Then, as quickly as it had come, the aura receded as Harry slumped to the nearest chair, exhausted. "Fine....so we wait...for how long?" he asked, resigned to the situation.

"We're not sure, Harry. It's hard to gauge the amount of time they needed to come up with a decision. Besides, I'm not really sure if they are willing to trust us..." said Arthur cautiously, not willing to trigger his temper again.

"Alright, sorry for my outburst. It's just that we were all excited about this...the potion is ready and all...we just needed the residents....It's really disappointing to hear the news." said Harry, then he suddenly stood up as an idea formed on his mind. "Maybe you should bring my aunt with you. She may be able to help you convince them since she's one of them."

"Why, that's a great suggestion, Harry, even if it came from you." said Snape with his usual sarcastic tone but Harry ignored it once more. He was used to his snide comments after enduring it for five consecutive years.

"And I'm sure you have enough sense on your head not to trust young Ginny with this information yet." Snape continued but he spoke in such a low voice so that only Harry could hear him. Harry stared at him, puzzled at his last comment but refrained from asking as Snape gave him a don't-ask-me- that-in-front-of-the-Weasleys look.

"By the way, Harry, this is Malcolm, one of the new recruits of the order. He wishes to teach your group with the fireball technique if you wanted to." said Bill for the first time, introducing the unknown visitor whom they all forgot was there as they discussed the recent developments on the plan.

"Nice to meet you, Malcolm. That was really awesome! Can you teach us now?" asked Harry eagerly, temporarily forgetting the disheartening news he received a while ago.

"That's what I'm here for. I can show you how to do it but you have to practice by yourselves. We have a lot of things to do, you know...Order matters." said Malcolm.

"That's still great! Wait here for a while. I'm just going to get the other members."

Harry excused him and excitedly left the room. The Order members, with the exception of Snape who usually gave an impression that smiling was a sign of weakness, just smiled good-naturedly at the young man eager to learn more. When Harry returned with the DA members, only Malcolm and Bill were there.

"I reckon they don't want to be accidentally hit with the fireball curse by overeager students." said Bill, cautiously charming himself with a fire repellant charm and looking a little more cheerful now.

It turned out that Malcolm was a very efficient instructor. Soon they all learned the basic technique and some were already able to form small fireballs on the palms of their hands. Ron, who hadn't seen the actual fireball that Malcolm conjured at the ministry, was simply bowled over and forgot his earlier dilemma too.

"Cool!" exclaimed Ron as Malcolm gave them a demonstration of what a really powerful fireball would look like.

"Cool? Don't you mean 'hot'?" said Hermione as she held the fireball on her small palm and was getting a little bit affected by the heat.

"Oh, yeah, that too." said Ron, with eyes still transfixed at the ongoing demonstration. Malcolm strode over to Hermione after he was done.

"Ouch, that must hurt! it's really not advisable to hold it for so long... You have to hurl it at the enemy as soon as you conjure it. That way, you won't feel the heat much." he explained as he looked at Hermione's blistered hand. Upon seeing her hand, the other members quickly hurled their fireballs on the ball and extinguished it with the water cannon spell.

By the end of the session, all DA members could perform the spell although some fireballs were bigger than the others but Malcolm assured them that with constant practice, their fireballs would be powerful enough to topple down at least ten death-eaters at once.

"You were great! Not all first-timers could do that but I guess your previous training helped you to learn the spell fast. Let your blisters heal first before you practice again. Ciao!" With that, he and Bill went out of the room and disappeared somewhere before they could stop them.

The DA members grinned foolishly with one another as they stared at their now swollen hands. It really hurts but who cares? That's one major spell that was worth the pain. They all went to Madam Pomphrey who just sprinkled some powder on each of their hands and within a few minutes, their hands were healed much to their relief.

It was already dinner time when they heard the news about Ginny.

"I assume you already know what happened to Miss Weasley so I don't have to elaborate. She will be fully recovered by tomorrow morning and I forbid all of you to bombard her with questions until she's ready to talk about it. Do I make myself clear?" said Professor McGonagall as she sliced a well done steak on her plate.

"Yes, Professor McGonagall." said everyone in a way that the sickeningly sweet Umbridge would be proud of.

The following day, Harry was jerked awake by a very forceful shove from one very excited Ron.

"Harry, you sleepyhead, get up now! Ginny's awake! Quick, let's visit her. Hermione and Neville are already there with her." said Ron, handing him his glasses to save time.

"Fine...fine...just when I getting to the best part of my dream, my so-called best friend interrupts..." grumbled Harry, slowly getting up from the bed.

"Hey, I didn't mean ---- what kind of dream?"

"Uhh...Never mind...." said Harry, turning his back on Ron and pretending to fix something to hide his flushed face.

"A-ha! That kind, huh?" said Ron, his eyes twinkling with mischief, the same look that the twins wore whenever they had thought of a particularly brilliant prank. "I can't wait till I tell the others..."

Harry's eyes went wide as he grasped Ron's innuendo. "Not that, you idiot! I was having a very wonderful time with...." Then as if he just registered the reason why Ron woke him up, "Did you say Ginny's awake? Come on!" He quickly grabbed the hand of his confused friend and ran to where Ginny was.

They found Hermione, Neville, Fred and George, and Colin chatting animatedly with Ginny while Luna observed them from a nearby chair. Ginny beckoned them to come closer when she noticed their arrival. She gave each of them a hug, murmuring an apology as she did so.

"Guys, I'm really sorry... especially to you, Ron and Hermione. I didn't mean to harm you in any way. I just don't know what came to me." she said, her lower lip trembling as tears started to flow from her eyes.

"Hush, it's okay now. We're here for you so never ever entertain the

crazy idea think that we'd abandon you, okay?" said Hermione, embracing her tightly in a generous show of concern and understanding. Ginny nodded mutely while she silently pleaded for the others' forgiveness.

"Don't worry, Ginny. We understand. We know you are not really evil. It's that Malfoy! Maybe he had done something to make you do those things..." said Ron, not noticing how Ginny tensed at the mention of Draco's name.

Nobody noticed but Luna who was carefully scrutinizing Ginny's face for any sign of deception. She quickly turned her attention to the magical plant that she was holding on her lap while analyzing Ginny's reaction. She did not even notice when Harry sat by her side.

"Hey, hon, what's wrong?" Luna was startled by his question.

"Oh! Nothing...just thinking..."

"About what?"

"Nothing in particular...just wondering about the whereabouts of my father again...why Ginny was here...and what is going to happen now..." she answered truthfully. She was, afterall, her boyfriend and she valued their relationship too much to taint it with lies.

"Hmm...so you have doubts about Ginny too? Don't worry too much, love. Everything will be alright." said Harry, enveloping her in his arms and planting a soft kiss on her cheeks.

"Was Draco there? How come he did not come to your rescue when someone cursed you." they heard Fred ask and they walked over to join the conversation.

"Why did you come with them?" asked George, curious too.

"It was Draco who hit me and I can't believe he did that to me. I didn't know where we were going at first. I thought we're just going to a death-eater conference. I didn't even know that dad was the new minister." replied Ginny remorsefully. "I was afraid but when I saw

what Lucius was about to do, I simply lost my mind and ran to protect him. I would never forgive myself if something bad happened to him." Her brothers gave her sympathetic looks and offered to assassinate Draco at the first chance they got.

"You don't have to do that. I don't want my father to lock my brothers in Azkaban for killing someone." said Ginny, smiling slightly.

'If she was lying, then she's putting up a very convincing front.' thought Luna as she surveyed her reaction. '...or maybe I was just being paranoid...'

"Hey, Ginny! We're running the Quibbler now. Maybe you could help with the articles...you know...some inside info about the death-eaters...It's really great to have you back!" said Colin, aiming his camera at the stunned red-headed girl.

"You were the ones responsible for that?!? I should have known...It's giving Lucius a major headache. He couldn't figure out who was publishing the paper and how it was being distributed. He suffered Lord Voldemort's wrath because of his failure to find out." said Ginny, genuinely delighted at hearing the information.

"Out of the way now....give the poor girl a break." Madam Pomphrey ordering the visitors out, providing Harry with a perfect excuse to talk to his friends away from Ginny.

He immediately called all DA members, aside from Ginny, for a quick meeting. He updated them on the status of the Crigod's residents. As expected, they were all disappointed too but Harry alleviated their concern by pointing out that some things could not be rushed. The members reluctantly agreed as they could not argue with that fact. Harry took a deep breath before stating the last part of the agenda.

"I know most of us had been friends with Ginny, some closer than most and we're all very glad that she's back. However, we must limit the information that we share with her."

"What do you mean? You don't trust my sister?" exclaimed Ron indignantly. Fred, George and Neville looked a little miffed too. They

thought Harry was close to Ginny.

"It's not that he doesn't trust her, Ron. He's just being careful." said Luna in Harry's defense.

"Yeah, Ron. She did hit you with the Cruciatus Curse, didn't she? That's not to be taken lightly." said Cho, agreeing with Luna for the first time.

"Wait a minute --- this is our sister we're talking about, not some bloody Slytherin!" exclaimed Fred in disgust.

"It's not about houses, Fred. Harry's right. We have to be careful. There's nothing wrong with that, is there? We'll let her in on everything as soon as we think it's safe." said Hermione calmly to diffuse the tension but Ron and the twins only gave her vicious glares before agreeing against their will.

"We have to be careful but not that careful that we won't even talk to her about anything. We can start with talking to her about old times...making her feel at home and secure. She can join our training if she's physically fit enough for that -- we don't want her to feel left out or anything. We can also share our past experiences with her but no information shall be given about Crigod's Commune and the house-elves liberation front until we're sure it's safe." stated Harry, quickly putting an end to the meeting before the hot-headed Weasley brothers decide to curse them all. He just hoped that Ginny was not up to something as Luna had feared or else...

Two weeks had passed but still no news about the residents of Crigod's Commune. But Harry refused to allow himself to be the first to crack under the mounting desperation. He had to put on a brave and hopeful stance in front of the DA members who were now getting restless about the lack of news. Even the death-eaters were silent after the attack on the Ministry. It seemed that the plan to attack the werewolves' den was abolished or they would have heard about it by now. That was very fortunate on their part because if Voldemort noticed the peculiar behavior of the dementors, then he would surely find out that something was amiss. Harry assumed that maybe they were currently laying low and rethinking their plans to take over the wizarding world.

The only positive thing now was that Ginny seemed to be sincere in her actions. By the end of the week, she had already been allowed to join the DA meetings and had even been requested to write a few articles for the Rebel Quibbler. Her relationship with the others greatly improved too making them overlook her 'minor blunder' as the twins liked to put it. A discreet cough distracted Harry from his thoughts. He turned around to see Dudley wringing his gigantic hands behind him, hesitating to approach him.

"Hey, why are you standing there? Sit here." he politely asked him to sit on the chair in front of him. He noticed that Dudley was still hesitant but decided to do just that.

"Err...H-harry, I was wondering if you had any idea what mother was doing right now...I mean, that horrible professor of yours fetched her one morning and she had not returned till then...me and my father are worried already." said Dudley.

"Oh, so Uncle Vernon is still alive...I thought he already dropped dead from shock upon seeing so many magical beings here. I haven't seen him for a long time." commented Harry, not really answering his cousin's question. His cousin gave him a reproachful look. "Oops, sorry, bad joke."

"So...do you know?"

"I may or may not know but it's her story to tell not mine." said Harry casually. Seeing his cousin's nervous expression, he decided to elaborate more, "Don't worry, I'm sure everything's fine. She'll come back soon."

"I hope so...D-dad has been really weird since she left and one time, he-- he hit me..." Harry could see that Dudley was about to cry now.

"He hit you? B-but why?"

"I d-don't know...we were just talking about school and stuff then I a-accidentally told him what I experienced when we were attacked by dementoids --"

"Dementors not dementoids, Dud."

"Whatever...then he went berzerk and shouted obscenities at me as if I was a monster... then he hit me. I stayed out of his way since then...."

"God! Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I was ashamed to ask for your help and I really did not think that you would listen to me...I mean, I was horrible to you and all...why would you bother..."

"Forget about it. That's all in the past now. Can you tell me what happened when you were attacked?" Harry was definitely curious now as to why that particular memory would trigger his uncle to hurt his only son.

"Remember when I first went to Smeltings? I had no friends there aside from Piers and we were not on the same section. The first few weeks had been so terrible. I suffered some major bullying from the upperclassmen there and I had to endure it or else Dad would be so disappointed in me. I did not complain to the headmistress either because the bullies threatened me with more physical injuries. One night the teachers had a conference. The bullies got tired of making a punching bag out of me...and they decided to...."

Dudley finally broke down and Harry stared in confusion as he watched his cousin looking so fragile. He thought his cousin had it all and was never made to suffer anything...but here he was, crying his heart out about something terrible that happened at the exclusive school that his uncle was boasting about.

"What happened?" he gently encouraged him to go on, knowing that sharing the burden would make him feel better.

"Since there are no girls in our school, they d-decided to...release their umm-adolescent urges on me..." Harry exclaimed in disgust at that. What persons on their right mind would think of doing that? And they were still minors!

"...They violently removed my clothing b-but before they could do anything else, something weird happened...I couldn't explain it but it was as if a mysterious light had enveloped me. I shielded my eyes from the blinding light and when I opened them, I saw the bullies lying on the ground, unconscious. I was so scared that I didn't even bother to get dressed. I just gathered my clothes and ran to my room to hide."

"What happened to the bullies?" asked Harry furiously. 'Those bastards and I thought Malfoy was evil!'

"They got scared of me after that...and they did not tell anyone about it either. From then on, other mysterious things had happened to me but I was in denial. I don't want to think that I'm like you because I know my parents would be furious. But living here, I realized that your kind is not that bad and if there's anything that I could do to help, then maybe I should just do it."

Harry stared at his cousin in shock. First, his aunt now his cousin? A wizard? But surely, Dumbledore would have known...how come Dudley had never received a letter? So many questions unanswered but instead he said, "I appreciate your offer Dud but you better talk to your mother first when she comes back. I'm sure she can enlighten you on some of your problems. I'll see what I can do about Uncle Vernon."

Dudley nodded and for the first time, Harry felt that he had a real cousin.

"MY LITTLE PUMPKIN!" Both Harry and Dudley were startled out of their wits upon hearing the unearthly cry of someone who had just arrived.

"MUM!" Dudley quickly ran to his mother and embraced her tightly. "I missed you so much. Where have you been?"

Upon seeing the happy reunion, Harry discreetly left the two. They had a lot to talk about and he did not want to interfere. He immediately scanned the room for Snape. If his aunt was here, then it meant that Snape was also around. He did not have to look hard. The smug face of the professor was hard to miss since he was obviously looking for him too.

"Prepare your group, Potter. They are all at the Ministry right now waiting for our signal." said Snape without so much as a good morning to him.

"Are we going now?"

"Unless you have any objection. I was under the impression that you were in a hurry." said Snape with the usual sneer on his face.

"I am." said Harry.

Harry hastily rounded up all the members for a quick scenario building before they return to Crigod's Commune. He was about to start the meeting when he noticed that Cho, Luna and Ginny were not yet there.

"Where are the others?" he asked. The present DA members just shrugged their shoulders.

"Wait here. I'll look for them first." he said.

"We'll come with you." said Ron and Hermione at once.

Harry did not bother to waste time disagreeing with them. Instead, he whipped out the Marauder's Map that he always carry around in his cloak to locate the missing members. He was puzzled to discover that all three were standing just outside the Room of Requirements. When Ron and Hermione peeked into the map, they too found it strange. But nothing was stranger than the scene they witnessed when they opened the door. Cho and Luna were standing side by side, both glaring and pointing their wands at the person in front of them. They couldn't see the other person yet but they knew it was Ginny.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" exclaimed Ron as he ran outside to force their wands down. Hermione went with him.

"Luna, what's the meaning of this?" asked Harry. He couldn't believe that Luna would dare attack anyone, much less Ginny, since she was one of her close friends at Hogwarts.

"Ask her!" said Luna, vehemently pointing her finger at Ginny.

"Ginny, what ----"

"Oh, Harry! Thank goodness you're here! I just came out for a while to get some fresh air and next thing I knew, they already had their wands pointed at me and accused me of terrible things..." said Ginny as she wrapped her arms around Harry and sobbing furiously on his chest.

"You see! You upset her!" shouted Ron, looking as if he was about to knock them cold if they had not been females.

"Upset! Go side with her then but don't expect us to apologize!" screamed Cho too.

"ENOUGH! We all have to go back to the Training Room now. We have work to do. We can settle this later." said Hermione and she entered the room in a huff followed by Ron. Ginny was still clinging to Harry's arm as they went after them. Cho and Luna trailed behind...enabling them to witness the triumphant smirk on the girl's face as she glanced maliciously at their direction.

The DA members were shocked to find so many people waiting for them outside the village. Moody, being his usual paranoid self, went over to them for final instructions while Petunia joined her previous neighbors.

"How many enemies are inside?"

"Three death-eaters and a battalion of dementors but don't worry about them. They became tame after they lost their leader." replied Harry.

"Alright, then. You go first, then the residents accompanied by Order members will follow at your signal. Make sure the dementors are out of the way. We don't want them to feel nervous on their first day back. Are you sure your group can handle that?" asked Moody, eyeing him surreptitiously.

"Affirmative! By the way, how many are they?"

"About fifty. Your aunt had quite a fanatical fervor. She convinced most of them to go despite the danger." said Moody, his usual abrupt demeanor replaced with a momentary tinge of admiration for the horse-faced woman who never failed to irritate him before. Harry smiled slightly at seeing this, proud of his aunt too.

"Are you finished with your discussion?" said Lupin, tapping Moody on his shoulder to catch his attention.

"Hello Lupin! Good to see you!" said Harry, glad at seeing the professor he came to regard as a friend.

"Go now, boy. Don't let me keep you." said Moody after instructing Petunia to open the door for them.

Harry nodded and this time, he did not instruct the DA members to disillusion themselves. He was confident that they could handle three foolish death-eaters even if they were completely visible.

"Alright, guys, as soon as the door's open, run inside and stun every

moving creature there. I'll handle the dementors." instructed Harry to his members. He noticed the door appear. "NOW!"

All members hurried inside and deafening cries of "Stupefy" were heard echoing around the place. Harry ignored them all and purposely rushed to where the dementors' were to give the necessary command. Within a few minutes, DA had everything under control and Harry sent sparks on the sky to signal that it was safe for the others to come inside. The residents were all on the verge of tears as they stepped into the place they once called home... the place that they now realized was still their home. The Order members took their respective positions to secure the location while they perform the ritual.

"Hermione, Cho....the potion. Now, everyone form a circle." commanded Harry as the potion was placed on top of the table that Lupin had conjured for their use.

The residents religiously followed his instruction while DA members formed an outer circle to serve as the second line of defense in case enemies arrive and got past the Order members.

The power acquired From these magical beings Obtained through evil means Be restored by the new king

To conquer the power within Downfall of the Dark Lord near Let the Crigod's children Reclaim the power denied

The chanting continued led by Hermione and Cho until the Power Revival Potion started to boil on its own volition. Harry looked at the two and they both nodded indicating that it was time for Harry to add the final ingredient.

"EXPECTO PATRONUM!" an enormous stag immediately exploded from his wand and circled all the residents before halting in front of the potion.

"PASSUS PATRONO HALKUM!" At Harry's command, a rainbow of colors emanated from the stag and was gradually absorbed by the brewing potion. They all watched in fascination at the wide array of

colorful sparks dancing around the silver cauldron reluctantly lent by Snape for this particular event. When the captivating display had subsided, Hermione and Cho quickly scooped the concoction into golden tea cups courtesy of Professor McGonagall while Harry, Luna, Ron and Neville passed the cups to each of the residents with the careful instruction that they should not drink it yet.

Every resident held the golden tea cup with quivering hand, nervously awaiting their fate. Hermione, satisfied that everything was going according to plan, ordered them all to state each of their complete names clearly, maiden names for married women of course, and their residence during the time of the attack before drinking the potion.

As soon as the potion was consumed, the residents all collapsed on the ground. DA members looked at one another, horrified at seeing them fall. What have they done? Hermione and Cho frantically searched their notes for any reference about side effects or something but there was none. Other DA members took the residents' pulse to see if their breathing was still normal but were aghast when they noticed that their heartbeat was erratic.

"Harry! What's happening?" asked Ron nervously.

"I don't know. This was not supposed to happen." said Harry, also confused. He looked at Hermione and Cho to seek their assurance that it was only natural but their panicked expressions alarmed him too. He saw Luna approach the two, apparently trying to calm them down enough to find a solution to the problem.

Snape, Moody and Lupin immediately rushed to their side when they noticed the commotion too.

"What happened here?" demanded Moody.

"We don't know. I think something went wrong..." said Harry weakly.

"You should have let me brew the potion." said Snape, his usual smirk replaced with concern at seeing the bodies lying helplessly on the ground.

"You were always away on a mission and we honestly thought that we could do it without your help." stated Harry, his eyes not leaving the bodies of the residents as if mentally willing them to be alright.

Suddenly, they all heard a loud crash from behind the door. All heads instantaneously turned to the direction of the sound with wands at the ready only to be greeted with the unwelcome sight of figures wearing hoods to cover their hideous faces.

The death-eaters sauntered to the other side of the group miraculously unscathed. As opposed to their usual tendency, they did not fire a single curse to the wizards present....neither did the Order and DA members. It was as if everyone was waiting for some signal of sorts before they start the battle. Even the trigger-happy Moody controlled his urge to curse the repulsive faces behind the masks. The two conflicting forces stared at each other malevolently but no one dared make the first move. The silence was deafening and the million-dollar question was nagging everyone's mind --- 'What's going to happen now?'

Harry secretly ordered the DA members to block the unconscious residents from the dark wizards' view. The silent battle of wits continued. Several agonizing minutes had passed but still, nobody moved aside from the dementors that came out of their hiding when they sensed the arrival of individuals not covered by their king's previous instruction. But they too seemed confused at the lack of activity that they dared not come near them.

The waiting continued until some decided to sit down and relax for a while to conserve their strength. Just when everyone was bored enough to attempt to lie down, the gate magically opened once again to reveal the arrival of the most vicious, most cunning, most evil wizard of all time ---- LORD VOLDEMORT!

"I see you have all been patiently waiting for my arrival." he casually strode into the death-eaters' location as if they were all there for a peaceful gathering instead of an imminent combat. He took in the surroundings and immediately singled Snape out. "Ahh, Severus, my once loyal servant, not as effective as before, are you? Weren't you able to find out our latest plan? Didn't you even wonder why you were all able to come here so easily?" Snape cringed at his touch.

"What do you want?" asked Harry, eyeing the dark lord carefully.

"Patience....patience...We'll soon get to that. By the way, I would like to give you the pleasure of knowing that a number of my loyal servants are on the way to the ministry and your hiding place. At my

signal, the death-eaters would attack and the dementors would suck their souls living you with no other allies. Fortunately, I have a more efficient spy than you do." The dark lord cackled merrily, clearly elated at tormenting his audience.

"You're lying!" shouted Harry, knowing full well that the dementors would not follow Voldemort's orders. He couldn't be sure about the death-eaters but he did not believe that they could overcome the aurors at the ministry now that they had ample preparation. His only worry now was the school. Only a few competent wizards were left there.

"Fool! Would you like me to give you proof?"

"What do you want?" asked Harry furiously.

"Be my servant and I will call off the attacks and let your friends here walk free. Their lives are in your hands, Potter. I advise you to choose wisely." Voldemort scanned the group again until his eyes fell on Luna. "On second thought, maybe I need to give you enough reason to comply to my wishes." With a wave of his hand, Luna was suddenly disarmed and thrown forcefully to the horde of death-eaters waiting on his side.

Harry was horrified at seeing his girlfriend at such a delicate situation. The Order members immediately raised their wands but was stopped by Voldemort's words.

"The moment you attack, my servants will do too and the girl will perish."

The Order members lowered their wands furiously but one death-eater suddenly ran to Voldemort.

"You said you won't hurt my daughter if I join you!" he exclaimed as he removed his mask angrily. The onlookers were shocked as they saw who was behind the mask.

"Father!" screamed Luna upon seeing her father. She struggled to get free but the death-eaters held her tight.

"That was before she joined Potter."

"Then I refuse to be your servant anymore!" shouted Jack Lovegood, quickly sending the killing curse on Voldemort but it did not have the expected effect. He stared horrified at his previous master who was now mocking his efforts.

"You underestimated me. Now, you'll pay for your insolence. CRUCIO!" Jack immediately fell to the ground, writhing in pain.

"NOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" screamed Luna, tears flowing abundantly on her face as she stared at the helpless figure of his father. But she too was hit mercilessly by the Cruciatus Curse.

"INFERNUS GALACTICUS!" shouted Harry angrily, hurling the fireball at Voldemort who staggered due to the impact.

"I thought we understood each other, Potter." said the Dark Lord, apparently surprised at his attack.

"NO! YOU MISUNDERSTOOD ME. I'M SURE MY FRIENDS WOULD FORGIVE ME FOR CHOOSING TO FIGHT INSTEAD OF SIDING WITH YOU DESPITE THE CONSEQUENCES!" yelled Harry as he threw another spell at Voldemort.

The battle broke out immediately as if that was the signal they have all been waiting for. Moody threw curses left and right like a mad man while Lupin fought along side with him. Snape fought the enemies as if he had been wanting to do that for the longest time and all the DA members put their training to good use.

"BATTLE FORMATION!" shouted Ron at a group of DA members not covering the Crigod residents who were still unconscious. Hermione, Neville, Cho and Weasley twins all pointed their wands upwards as Ron started to cast the spell they had practiced before.

"HYDRO OXYDUS!" The water cannon toppled several death-eaters attempting to hex them.

"ABSOLUTO PROTEGO!" the DA members hiding the Crigod residents casted the absolute shielding charm to deflect the curses sent their way.

"AVEDA KEDAVRA!" one death-eater managed to cast the killing spell but missed its target.

"IMPEDIMENTA!"

"PETRIFICUS TOTALUS!" Neville rendered one death-eater immobile by the spell.

"CRUCIO!" Hermione immediately fell to the ground, howling with pain.

"HERMIONE! NOOOO!!!!!!" exclaimed Ron as he ran to her side to help her. "Finite Incantatem!" Fred and George covered him as he did so. The battle formation was broken and they had to fight individually now.

"STUPEFY!" Ginny was hit from nowhere and she collapsed too. Neville immediately carried her body to where Ron had hidden Hermione.

"YOU, TRAITOR!" A death-eater sent the killing curse to Jack Lovegood before anyone could help him. Harry just turned his head on time to see the green light hit Luna's father squarely on the chest.

"NOOOOO!!!!!!! FATHER, DON'T LEAVE ME! PLEASE!! FATHER!!!!!!!" Luna's loud screams of grief and frustration echoed around the place and Harry's heart almost broke as he saw his girlfriend fall on the ground as if she lost all the will to live. He quickly ran to her side to protect her from harm but Luna seemed oblivious to his actions.

"VOLDEMORT! WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT ME LIKE A MAN FOR ONCE!" he shouted in frustration as he noticed more of his friends suffer more injuries. Some were already lying on the ground although he couldn't discern if they were dead or just unconscious.

"I am much more than a man, Potter. It's your choice." replied Voldemort lazily. "But I'll give you one more chance, surrender now and the others will walk free." He waved his hand once more and all of his friends were immediately disarmed.

The chaos halted for a while as they all waited for Harry's decision with bated breath. Harry was seriously considering the situation. He could summon their wands back but how long would it take before Voldemort could command his loyal followers to kill them all. He knew his friends could do wandless magic too but still not that strong. Despite his previous declaration, he honestly did not want his friends to suffer on his behalf. Maybe agreeing with Voldemort now would give them more time....

"Well.....?" prompted Voldemort.

"I - I ----"

"Don't do it, Harry!"

Everyone turned around to see where the brave voice came from. It was Harry's aunt and she was glowing with the same powerful aura that Harry emanated when he was really angry. Other Crigod residents followed, flexing their hands as if they were just getting used to their newfound strength. They all watched in awe as Petunia and her friends effortlessly used wandless magic to arm their colleagues once more.

Voldemort's eyes widened at the enormous display of power. He was not expecting this and judging from the stunned expression of his minions, they were not ready for this either.

'KILL THEM ALL!!!' roared Voldemort, his ruby eyes glowing a dangerous red in rage. The light side braced themselves for another round of violent exchange but Voldemort's army seemed too scared to attack. each of them eying the wandless combatants with fright.

"Now, the tables have turned, Tom." said Harry, bursting with confidence once more.

"Let us see!" Voldemort clicked his fingers and the dementors slowly approached them.

Harry noticed that the Order members and Crigod residents became immediately anxious upon seeing the battalion of dementors ready to attack at Voldemort's command. Only the DA members seemed unconcerned.

Voldemort laughed evilly once more. "Let us see how well you could stop them all with your pitiful Patronus charms." He clicked his fingers once more and ordered the dementors to attack.

Nothing happened.

Voldemort commanded them once more. Again, nothing happened.

The Order members and Crigod residents were puzzled by the unusual behavior of the dementors. The death-eaters seemed confused as well.

"I COMMAND YOU TO ATTACK THEM NOW!" shouted Voldemort in desperation but the dementors remained still.

"Don't waste your breathe. They won't follow your orders." said Harry calmly, suppressing the laughter that was threatening to escape from his lips.

"Why is that?"

"Because you are not their leader."

"That's ridiculous! I am the Dark Lord! They have to obey me!" exclaimed Voldemort.

"Watch me!" said Harry venomously as he ordered the dementors to capture the death-eaters but to leave the dark lord to him.

The dementors immediately glided to the frightened death-eaters who did know how to conjure the Patronus Charm. They all ran to the gate at once to escape but the dementors were faster neglecting only a

few dark wizards who were clever and experienced enough to suppress their auras. Harry faced Voldemort once more.

"Now, I am giving you the chance to decide --- surrender or die?" said Harry but Voldemort already started throwing curses at him.

"You really want to do things the hard way, do you?" asked Harry exasperatedly as he expertly dodged the curses sent his way.

"AVEDA

KEDAVRA!"

"EXPELLIARMUS!"

Like what happened on Voldemort's rebirth, the jet of green light from Voldemort's wand met the red spark that blasted from Harry's in midair. Then both of their wands vibrated vigorously until a bright, deep gold beam connected their wands once again.

The onlookers watched in amazement as the two were lifted on the ground with an invisible force and the golden beam splintered and criss-crossed around them to form a golden, dome-shaped web. And then an earthly, beautiful sound filled the air -- phoenix song. Harry smiled as large beads of lights appeared out of nowhere, rolling around the golden beam. He knew from experience that if he could force that bead of light to connect with Voldemort's wand, then he would see his parents again...but this time, he did not intend to escape. He just want to speak with them one last time, before he finishes their murderer off.

The death-eaters were the ones howling with frustration now as they, too, recalled this particular scenario. They would have loved to help their master but the dementors were making them weak now. The people on the side of the Light were actively cheering Harry on as they watched the growing anxiety on Voldemort's face.

Harry concentrated with all his might to push the bead to Voldemort's wand until finally, it connected. Harry was confused. How could the wand connect so fast whereas before he found it so difficult and it took a long time? And his wand was not vibrating as hard....Instinctively, Harry thought that something was wrong but he

could not place it yet. Instead he focused his attention on the figures escaping from Voldemort's wand. So many unfamiliar faces but Harry assumed that maybe he had killed so many wizards from their last encounter that it would take some time before the ghost of his parents appear. Harry waited patiently, not breaking the connection....but then another figure emerged...Harry gasped in surprise and confusion.....

"Sirius?" Harry could not believe his eyes...how could Sirius come out of Voldemort's wand? It was Lestrage who killed him.

"Nice to see you, Harry. I see you were stronger than before." said the ghost of Sirius, smiling gently at his grandson.

"H-how?"

"I know Lestrage killed me. I could not understand it either but be watchful. Don't trust your eyes. This might not really be Voldemort you're fighting with or maybe he's using Lestrage's wand."

"B-but the wands connected...Dumbledore said it happened because our wands have the same core so he must be Voldemort." said Harry, still confused.

"I would love to chat but we don't have much time, Harry. Just remember, be vigilant!" Harry nodded solemnly. "And don't you go blaming yourself for what happened to me...You're the greatest grandson I ever had and I am so proud of you."

More and more wizards came out of his opponent's wand and some had approached their relatives and friends watching the battle to finally say goodbye. Harry waited some more but still, neither the ghost of his parents nor Cedric's came out of the wand. He stared at the mocking figure of his opponent. Voldemort was acting as if he had the upperhand on the situation. But before Harry could ponder more on his reaction, the beads of light went through the wand and coursed through Voldemort's trembling body.

Without warning, the evil wizard soon convulsed uncontrollably as if a tremendously high voltage of electricity was ransacking his interior.

Then the beads of light escaped from every pore of his being.... Then the dome- shaped web surrounding them gradually faded while the phoenix song struck its last note.... Voldemort's reign of terror had finally ended...The Prophecy was fulfilled and after several months of sowing evil, murder and destruction, the most vicious, most cunning, most feared sorcerer of all time....fell lifeless on the ground.

Meanwhile, Harry Potter, the Boy-Who-Lived-To-Kill-The-Dark-Lord, was staring at his long time nemesis with disbelief. That fast? He was not even wounded or extremely drained with power and energy as he usually felt after an encounter with him. This did not even come close to the dramatic confrontation he imagined and pondered upon -- with all the giants, werewolves, vampire and what-have-yous ferociously assaulting one another and leaving the battle field in ruins, dripping with blood... Not that he was complaining though but this seemed kind of anti-climactic somehow....'What's going on?'

"YES!!!"

A loud whoop snapped Harry away from his reverie as the entire light side immediately ran to him, cheering wildly. Even Snape was jumping up and down like a maniac and his Aunt Petunia smothered him with kisses while crying with joy.

"It's a good thing you were able to pull that off, Harry. We're not sure if we can do more magic due to lack of practice. We just banked on shocking them enough to give you time." said his aunt.

"You did it, mate!" exclaimed Ron, still carrying the limp form of Hermione.

"You had us worried for a while, boy. Why didn't you tell us that you're the new leader of dementors?" growled Moody, although he too was grinning foolishly making his face appear more disfigured than before.

"It was supposed to be a surprise, you know." answered Fred on his behalf.

"Yeah, you should have seen your faces. I thought Lupin would pee

on his pants in horror." guffawed George, punching Lupin lightly on his arm. Lupin just smiled good-naturedly at him, not taking offense at his joke.

Harry grinned despite his misgivings and turned around to look for Luna. However, his smile was quickly replaced with concern as he saw her kneeling beside the fallen figure of her father, unmoving and with a blank look on her face. He rushed to her side to comfort her but Luna did not even look at him. She just continued staring blankly into space and muttering repeatedly ---- "It's just a dream....just a dream..."

Across the ecstatic crowd, partially hidden by the soul-sucking creatures, nobody noticed the small band of death-eaters that stealthily made their way through the gate and disappeared into thin air led by a newcomer with claw-like fingers and another with a shining, silver hand....while the other followers were callously left behind to suffer a fate worse than death itself...

Chapter 23 - The Nightmare is not yet Over

HARRY POTTER, THE-BOY-WHO-LIVED, CONQUERED THE DARK LORD!!! - The Daily Prophet

REJOICE! HE-WHO-MUST-NOT-BE-NAMED IS FINALLY DEAD!!! - Wizard's Weekly

PROPHECY FULFILLED!!! - Auror's Digest

POETIC JUSTICE -- HARRY AVENGED HIS PARENTS ON THEIR DEATH ANNIVERSARY!!! - The Rebel Quibbler Hermione closed the newspapers in disgust. "Hmp! The Cowards --- flaunting their papers now that it is safe for them to come out! Except the Rebel Quibbler, of course."

"Yeah, sounds like hypocrisy to me." said George who was currently being mended by Fred, his twin brother, who in turn was being massaged by Lee who was trying to get away from Zacharias whose wound he unknowingly infected by treating him without washing his wands first. Hermione just rolled her eyes in exasperation and went to look for more intellectually UNchallenged persons to talk to.

"Hey, where's Harry?" she asked Ron who was currently gorging himself with food as if he was deprived with it for so long.

"With Luna, I guess..." answered Ron after washing all the food down his large stomach with a pitcher of pumpkin juice.

"Really, Ron! You're so disgusting!"

"Hey! I'm a growing boy and I did answer your question, didn't I?" said Ron, looking a little bit embarrassed.

"Fine...fine...but you know, I still can't believe Harry defeated Voldemort so easily..." said Hermione.

"Yeah, you-know-who was ---"

"Say Voldemort, Ron. He.....is.....DEAD....No one needs to fear him anymore."

"You have a point there...as I was saying, Voldy wasn't as terrifying as before." mumbled Ron, eyeing Hermione's pastry covetously. Hermione grudgingly offered it to him while muttering something unintelligible which incredibly sounded like "Glutton!" but Ron just smiled widely at her.

"How do you know? You haven't even met him before..."

"I just know."

"What kind of an answer is that?"

"I think he means that it was just his subconscious mind speaking but he could not give a logical explanation...yet." answered Cho as she joined in the conversation.

"But it doesn't change the fact that he's dead, right?" asked Hermione, glad that somebody with the right state of mind was there.

"Maybe..." replied Cho evasively.

"What do you mean?" prompted Hermione, not willing to end the conversation at that.

"Because even Harry had his doubts too."

"How do you know? He didn't even talk to us...." said Hermione, looking slightly hurt and offended that somebody else had known before her and Ron.

"I heard him talking to Luna..." The two looked inquiringly at her. "I just came by to visit her then I accidentally heard him talking to Luna about it..." Cho paused for a while. "I really feel sad about what happened to Luna. She's really nice and I am so ashamed of myself for even thinking that she's just a good for nothing lunatic!"

"I couldn't believe what happened either. I don't know which was worse --- her not knowing where her dad was or finding out that he bartered for her life then murder a few minutes later...She should be celebrating with us right now..." said Hermione remorsefully.

"HARRY!" exclaimed Ron suddenly, nearly turning the table in his haste to stand up.

"Hey, what's wrong?" said both Cho and Hermione at once, seeing his glazed expression.

"I just realized that Harry might be blaming himself right now for what happened to Luna's dad. We need to talk to him before he wallow in self-condemnation again!" said Ron, unaware of the admiring glances that Hermione sent his way as he spoke.

The three immediately went to Luna's ward to visit her and to talk some sense to Harry before he wallow again in 'self-condemnation. As they approached the ward, they saw Harry sitting beside Luna, holding her hand tight and engaging in a one-sided conversation, hoping that it would somehow penetrate her mind.

"I'm really really sorry, Luna....I promise I would make it up to you somehow. I know I couldn't bring your father back but please...please come back....please come back for me...I need you...I love you. I have never told you that before but I'm telling you now....I love you, hon..." Harry tried to wipe the tears that rolled down his cheeks but he could not help it.

Seeing Luna like this was gradually destroying the little sanity that he still possessed but he needed to do this....for Luna and for himself. He was holding on to Madam Pomphrey's words that there was nothing physically wrong with Luna. Her catatonic state was just due to shock and that her mind still refused to accept what happened but the mediwizard informed him that it was only temporarily but for how long, no one could really know.

Ron, Hermione and Cho stared consciously at one another after witnessing Harry's heart-wrenching statements. It was Hermione who spoke first.

"I-I think we should give them some privacy for now. They deserve it...Maybe we can talk to Harry later..." she said weakly. The others agreed, not really wanting to intrude.

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LETTER TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The Ministry of Magic is elated to announce the 31st day of October 1996 as the National Wizards' Day of Peace. For those who have not heard of the recent developments on the wizard community yet, this is the day that Dark Lord had finally been defeated by Harry Potter.

The Ministry wanted to name it Harry Potter Day but Mr. Potter politely refused because he firmly believes that it was not only him who had vanquished the enemy. It is the combined effort of the Wizarding World that ended Voldemort's reign of terror. As such, let this day be commemorated as the day that our world had joined together to fight evil and may this day remind us all of the sufferings and losses we endured to make our world a better place.

In this light, let it be known that all the wizarding schools shall be opened once more to continue educating young witches and wizards to their full potential. The new Headmaster for Durmstrang Academy would now be Professor Marcus Leninski and Professor Minerva McGonagall for Hogwarts Schools of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Professor Albus Dumbledore's passing had been devastating but wherever he was, the reinstatement of these institutions would definitely make him happy.

The Ministry shall provide assistance for the restoration of these schools as soon as magically possible. Also, the whole academic program and schedule for this school year had been altered for the students' benefit. This school year would now last until August 15, 1997 and there would be a reasonable two-week respite before the beginning of the following term in which the academic schedule would revert to normal.

The shops in Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade was restored and fully operational. The public may now purchase their necessities there. However, we regret to inform you that Mr. Ollivander is still missing until now. You may purchase the wands at the Ministry of Magic - Department of Wizard Trading where Mr. Ollivander's merchandise is currently being stored for safe-keeping.

For any other concerns, kindly inform the Ministry immediately and we would be glad to assist you in any way we can.

Hoping that the past few months would dissuade anyone from straying from the path of good.

Thank you very much and good day!

Sincerely yours,

Arthur Weasley Minister of Magic

"Oh, Ron, your father's dedication is overwhelming!" said Hermione as she read the letter that had just arrived. Everyone received the letter and some were already having mixed reactions about the content.

"Merlin! We'll begin the term next week!" exclaimed Neville.

"After all we've been through? This is unfair!" said Parvati in agony after scanning the paper.

"Really now. Don't you think this is the best thing that happened to us this past few months?" said Hermione in defense of the minister's decision.

"Speak for yourself." muttered the majority of the group.

"Suit yourselves! But I'm so excited...imagine we won't have to lose one school year just because some dark lord decided to conquer us..." said Hermione, then her eyes became suddenly wide with worry. "Wait! We haven't received our Hogwarts letters. We haven't even got the O.W.L results yet! How are we going to buy our school

supplies? And we only got a week to prepare!" She paced around the room as if figuring out a way to solve her dilemma as the others watched her disinterestedly.

Ron became suddenly busy with counting his fingers and soon piqued the others' curiosity including Hermione's.

"Hey! What are you doing?" asked Neville.

"Well, I just counted the number we're going to suffer this year. Our usual term lasts for ten months and now it's down to nine! Imagine, one month less! I guess dad's decision is okay with me." said Ron cheerfully. The others began counting too and upon confirming Ron's conclusion, they too became overjoyed with the idea.

"Trust Ron to think of it this way..." thought Hermione, smiling in spite of herself.

Harry continued to stare numbly at the letter perched on the bedside table where an owl had dropped it. Without even looking at its contents, he knew that it came from the new headmistress bearing their school letter and the dreaded O.W.L. results but he just could not bring himself to read it. The past few days had been surreal to him and returning to Hogwarts was farthest from his priorities.

The letter lay unopened as he continued to converse with Luna, trying very hard to bring some spark to her eyes. But there was none...He broke the contact for a while, defeated. Yet he needed to be strong... He read and reread the books he borrowed from the library but they all say the same thing. There was no cure....she just needed time to recuperate on her own.

"Harry! Have you got your Hogwarts letters?" whispered Ron, eyeing his bestfriend sympathetically. Several DA members decided that it was time to talk to Harry whether he was ready or not. The term would start within a few days and Harry had not even left Luna's side for a minute.

Harry nodded his head and pointed at the still unopened parchment beside him. Hermione picked it up and handed it to him.

"Open it. Luna will have wanted you to graduate, Harry. And it will take your mind off --- stuff." said Hermione.

Like a zombie that was totally devoid of feelings and free will, Harry reluctantly opened the letter and stared disinterestedly at its contents.

"I got five O.W.L.'s including Potions. I guess I can still pursue my ambition to be an Auror...and I was appointed as the new Quidditch Captain too." he said without enthusiasm in his voice. It was as if he was just reading a very boring history essay.

"QUIDDITCH CAPTAIN! That's cool, mate!" exclaimed Ron, patting him at the back but Harry did not even smile at his gesture.

"Uh-huh!" Harry nodded absentmindedly. "Have you still got your galleons with you?" he asked his friends as an afterthought.

"Yes, why?" asked Neville curiously.

"Hold on to it."

"But why?" asked Ron.

"Because the nightmare is not yet over..."

THE **END!**

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Author's Note: I sincerely hope that you enjoyed this story. I already finished the sequel entitled Harry Potter and the Lost Prophecy. Draco, Wormtail and Snape would play major roles in that book. I hope you would read it too :-)

Again, please remember to review! Thanks.